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## PELICAN BOOKS

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1903-1935

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### MY APPRENTICESHIP

BY  
BEATRICE WEBB  
(I)

Published in Pelican Books 1938

TO  
THE OTHER ONE



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Foreword by Bernard Shaw appears by kind permission of the editor of the *Spectator*.

## FOREWORD BY BERNARD SHAW

WE must admit that Beatrice Webb, whose eightieth birthday the *Spectator* feels impelled to celebrate, is a very notable woman. In the main mass of her work she is inseparable from the firm of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, whom a Labour Government tried vainly to disguise as Baron and Lady Passfield. The collaboration is so perfect that her part in it is inextricable. I, who have been behind the scenes of it, cannot lay my hand on a single sentence and say this is Sidney or that is Beatrice.

Nevertheless there is in literature a separate Beatrice; and later on there will be more. She is one of those terrible women who keep diaries. Sidney, the least autobiographical of human creatures, is no more capable of keeping a diary than I or you. I have never been able to find out where or when or how this diary contrived to get written, though I have spent months in Mrs. Webb's household and seen her working every day to the limit of human endurance at the great joint masterpieces all the time. But it exists; and the world will some day learn what a very clever woman, quite free from any sort of sentimental veneration, thought of the celebrities, nonentities, obscurities and real live wires who made up the public life of her time.

Besides, she was at work long before she collided with Sidney Webb. She had written a history of Co-operation, and thereby not only made the co-operators class-conscious, but established the importance and success of Consumers' Co-operation as distinguished from the futile at-

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tempts at co-operative production which had had no chance against Capitalism. That was the sort of thing she liked doing, though all the joys of the West End and the country houses were open to her. She was a born industrial investigator, and was satisfied by nothing short of personal contacts with the personalities operating the proletarian side of industry. Hunting, shooting, dancing and adventures in the marriage market, in which she was a desirable catch, were to her a waste of time when there were so many intensely important things to be investigated at the East End and in the manufacturing towns. When her relative, Charles Booth, financed his great enquiry into poverty to prove that it did not exist and that Karl Marx's world-shaking description of it was a fable, she joined him, and instead of consulting wage-lists and official figures, disguised herself and worked in sweaters' dens until her hopeless inferiority as a needlewoman and her obviously extreme eligibility as an educated managing woman to be the bride of young Ikey or Moses, the sons of the house, made further experiment in that direction impossible. But enough was enough. Marx won hands down.

It was this determination to sample movements and their leaders instead of reading about them that brought her into contact with the Fabian Society, which was making stir enough at the time to call for investigation. They were, as usual, a mixed lot, but with unerring judgment she fixed on Sidney Webb as a unique lump of solid ability without any complications. She had no difficulty in appropriating him with a completeness which was part of the fundamental simplicity of his nature; for she was an attractive lady; and when Sidney fell in love he did not do it by halves. Her family was amazed and scandalised, as she had seemed of all the young women in London the most certain to choose and

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marry a Cabinet Minister, if not a Prime Minister. And in those days Cabinet ministers were not six a penny. Her choice needs no justification now. Cabinets have flamed and crackled and died down like thorns under a pot; but Sidney Webb remains, piling up an authority and an eminence that have never been shaken. Asquith the contemptuous lived to canonise him.

In fact, the sole drawback to her choice was myself, a useful member of the Webbs' Fabian retinue, but highly obnoxious to Beatrice for the technical reason that I could not be classified. All her interest was in social organisation. Her job was the discovery of the common rules by which men bind themselves to co-operate for social ends. She had no use for exceptional people: degrees of ability and efficiency she could deal with; but the complications introduced by artists, Irishmen and the eccentric and anarchic individuals who infest revolutionary movements and have to be shot when the revolution succeeds, were, in her business of social definition and classification, simply nuisances. She would probably have got rid of me as most women get rid of their husbands' undesirable bachelor friends, but for one qualification which I possessed. I knew Webb's value. And so I was not only tolerated but heroically made much of until the joyous day when she discovered a classification for me. I was a Spite; and in that category I became happily domesticated at holiday times with the newly-wed pair until my own marriage six years later.

We were all three heavily afflicted with what Tolstoy's children called *Weltverbesserungswahn*, and went on solving all the social problems, and being completely ignored by the Press whilst noodles' orations in the official key were solemnly reported every day at length, provided the orator was a parliamentary careerist. As Beatrice had made the co-

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operators class-conscious single-handed, the two Webbs proceeded by the same tactile method to do the same for the Trade Unionists by their *History of Trade Unionism*, and followed this up by extending the field to the whole Labour movement in their *Industrial Democracy*. In the famous Minority Report on the Poor Law, Beatrice was extraordinarily active, whilst the monumental seven volumes on Local Government kept steadily growing through miracles of investigation until the pair, having become the most skilled and best-informed investigators on earth as far as we know, were ready for the great Soviet experiment, and in their advanced age were able to give the first competent account of the new social structures that are evolving in Russia, whilst the Press either screamed curses at the Red Spectre or represented the new Russia as an earthly paradise.

Meanwhile, not only does the diary go on ruthlessly: the diarist from time to time detaches herself from the firm to burst into autobiography in *My Apprenticeship*, with the design of teaching us all how to set about social investigation if our destiny, like hers, lies in this direction. Most of us care little for that, having neither any bent towards her profession nor much urgent *Weltverbesserungswahn*; yet the treatise on method holds us as a unique volume of confessions, to say nothing of its record of contacts with all sorts and conditions of men, from the most comfortably corrupt and reactionary functionaries to the most devoted revolutionists of the gutter, or from Herbert Spencer, whom her genial unmetaphysical father entertained much as he might have kept a pet elephant, to all the parliamentary figures who passed as great, from Joseph Chamberlain to—well, to the present moment. And these are no mere staring and gabbling reminiscences, but

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judgments and generalisations which give depth to the narrative and value to the time spent in conning it.

It is amazing that such a woman should survive in apparently undiminished vigour after eighty years among fools and savages who will rise to nothing but ecstasies of wholesale murder: still, if only because she has proved that such a feat is possible to an able Englishwoman, her statement of how she has done it must be placed within the reach of all her countrywomen, and incidentally of their male followers with political pretensions, mostly quite unfounded.

Its worth is guaranteed by her ancient and faithful colleague,

G. B. S.



## INTRODUCTION

BENEATH the surface of our daily life, in the personal history of many of us, there runs a continuous controversy between an Ego that affirms and an Ego that denies. On the course of this controversy depends the attainment of inner harmony and consistent conduct in private and public affairs. In some minds this self-examination relates to free will and determinism and leads to alternate periods of restlessness and apathy; sometimes it surges round the "to be" or "not to be" of a future life, driving the individual backwards and forwards, from church to lecture-hall, and from unbelief back again to belief; sometimes it fastens on problems of sex or of parenthood, with consequences happy or tragic. Or the problem to be solved may be one of professional ethics; the degree of honesty imperative in business transactions; the measure of truth-telling and self-subordination obligatory on a politician in trouble about his soul; or the relative claim of private clients and public authorities, which the professional man may have to settle for himself at the risk of loss of livelihood. With some individuals this half-submerged but often continuous controversy changes in subject-matter as years go on; with others all controversy dies down and the individual becomes purely practical and opportunist, and scoffs at those who trouble over ultimate questions of right and wrong. But where the individual has had the exceptional luck of being able to choose his work, or where he has been settled in work which he would otherwise have chosen, there may be set up a close correspondence between the



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underlying controversy and all his external activities, whether in the home or in the market-place, in the scientific laboratory or in the public service.

Now, it so happens that the internal controversy which has been perpetually recurring in my own consciousness, from girlhood to old age, led me in early life to choose a particular vocation, a vocation which I am still practising. The upshot of this controversy has largely determined my day-to-day activities, domestic, social and professional. This continuous debate between an Ego that affirms and an Ego that denies, resolves itself, in my case, into two questions intimately connected with each other, the answers to which yield to me a scheme of personal and public conduct. Can there be a science of social organisation in the sense in which we have a science of mechanics or a science of chemistry, enabling us to forecast what will happen, and perhaps to alter the event by taking appropriate action or persuading others to take it? And secondly, assuming that there be, or will be, such a science of society, is man's capacity for scientific discovery the only faculty required for the reorganisation of society according to an ideal? Or do we need religion as well as science, emotional faith as well as intellectual curiosity? In the following pages will be found my tentative answers to these two questions—that is, my philosophy of work or life. And seeing that I have neither the talent nor the training of a philosopher, I express the faith I hold in the simpler form of personal experience.

## CHAPTER I

### CHARACTER AND CIRCUMSTANCE

IN the following pages I describe the craft of a social investigator as I have practised it. I give some account of my early and crude observation and clumsy attempts at reasoning, and then of the more elaborated technique of note-taking, of listening to and recording the spoken word and of observing and even experimenting in the life of existing institutions. Though for the purpose of describing my craft I quote pages from my MS. diary, I have neither the desire nor the intention of writing an autobiography. Yet the very subject-matter of my science is society; its main instrument is social intercourse; thus I can hardly leave out of the picture the experience I have gathered, not deliberately as a scientific worker, but casually as child, unmarried woman, wife and citizen. For the sociologist, unlike the physicist, chemist and biologist, is in a quite unique manner the creature of his environment. Birth and parentage, the mental atmosphere of class and creed in which he is bred, the characteristics and attainments of the men and women who have been his guides and associates, come first and foremost of all the raw material upon which he works, alike in order of time and in intimacy of contact. It is his own social and economic circumstance that determines the special opportunities, the peculiar disabilities, the particular standpoints for observation and reasoning—in short, the inevitable bias with which he is started on his way to discovery, a bias which ought to be known to the student of his work so that it may be ade-

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quately discounted. Moreover, in the formative years of childhood and youth, the passionate search for a creed by which to live precedes the acquisition of a craft; the craft, in fact, growing out of the creed, or maybe out of the loss of a creed. Hence, if in describing my apprenticeship I tell too long and too egotistical a tale, the student can skip what appears to him irrelevant.

The family in which I was born and bred was curiously typical of the industrial development of the nineteenth century. My paternal grandfather, Richard Potter, was the son of a Yorkshire tenant farmer who increased the profits of farming by keeping a general provision shop at Tadcaster; my maternal grandfather, Lawrence Heyworth, belonged to a family of "domestic manufacturers" in Rossendale in Lancashire, the majority of whom became, in the last decades of the eighteenth century, "hands" in the new cotton mills. Evidently my grandfathers were men of initiative and energy, for they rose rapidly to affluence and industrial power, one as a Manchester cotton warehouseman, the other as a Liverpool merchant trading with South America. Nonconformists in religion and Radicals in politics, they both became, after the 1832 Reform Act, Members of Parliament, intimate friends of Cobden and Bright, and enthusiastic supporters of the Anti-Corn Law League.<sup>1</sup>

My father graduated in the new London University, of which my grandfather, as a leading Unitarian, was one of the founders. He was called to the Bar, but without

<sup>1</sup> Richard Potter, who had contested the borough of Wigan when it was still a close corporation, was returned as its member in the 1832 Parliament. Lawrence Heyworth became member for Derby in 1847. For details about the Potters of Tadcaster see *From Ploughshare to Parliament*, by my sister, Georgina Meinertzhagen.

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intending to practise. For a few years he divided his time between nursing his father, who was in failing health, and amusing himself in London political society. On the death of his father, being young, attractive and with sufficient means, he took to a life of leisure. It was at Rome, in the course of making the grand tour with a young sister, that he met my mother, likewise enjoying herself with a young brother. They fell in love amid the sights of Rome, married and settled as mere *rentiers* in Herefordshire, intending to take an active part in the work and pleasures of the country. But a stroke of good luck saved my parents and their children from this deadening environment. The financial crisis of 1847-48 swept away the major part of his moderate inheritance; and, with a rapidly increasing family, he had, at the age of thirty, to find some way of earning a sufficient livelihood. His father-in-law, Lawrence Heyworth, at that time a leading promoter of the new railways, made him a director of the Great Western Railway, whilst a schoolfellow, W. E. Price,<sup>1</sup> offered him a partnership in an old-established timber merchant's business at Gloucester. From this position of vantage my father became a capitalist at large.

The family income was mainly drawn from the timber yards of Gloucester, Grimsby and Barrow; but the mere routine of money-making did not satisfy my father. Daily attendance at an office, at work each day on the same range of facts, seemed to him as much the badge of an underling as manual work in factory or in mine. Once engaged in

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Price remained my father's greatest friend till death parted them. Ugly, shrewd, silent and kindly, he was for many years chairman of the Midland Railway and Liberal member for Gloucester. His grandson, Philips Price, famous for his adventures in and sympathy for Soviet Russia, contested Gloucester in the 1923 and 1924 elections as a Labour candidate of the Left Wing.

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business he quickly developed a taste for adventurous enterprise and a talent for industrial diplomacy. For the first two years of business life he worked assiduously at the Gloucester office, mastering the technique of the timber market. The horrors of winter fighting in the Crimean War yielded the first opportunity for big enterprise. He persuaded the English War Office, and afterwards the French Emperor, to save the soldiers' lives during the winter weather, by using the timber merchant's brains, together with the depreciated stock in the timber yard, for the output of wooden huts: an operation which was worth a profit of £60,000 to the firm.<sup>1</sup> From that time onwards he spent

<sup>1</sup> From an entry dated February 7, 1855, in the unpublished journals of N. W. Senior, quoted in *Many Memories of Many People*, by M. C. M. Simpson (daughter of Nassau Senior), pp. 170-71, I gather that my father found the French Government more efficient than the British Government in respect of the handling of the wooden huts.

"Jeune told me that Potter told him that for three weeks after he had made his proposal to the Duke of Newcastle he got no answer; that he wrote to ask what was to be done, and was told that the paper had been mislaid, and that they wished for a copy of it; that at length the War Department having, after a great delay, resolved to have them, they were made and sent by rail to Southampton, but that the contract entered into by the Ordnance ended when they reached the railway terminus; that, after some delay, another contract was entered into for putting them on board of steamers, but that this contract merely heaped them on deck; that a further contract and a further delay was necessary to get them down into the hold; and he does not believe that at this instant they have got beyond Balaklava. Louis Napoleon sent for Potter to Saint-Cloud to consult about their being supplied to the French army. In a couple of hours the whole matter was arranged between Louis Napoleon and himself. The question then was how soon the execution of it could be begun. This was Saturday. A letter could not get to Gloucester before Monday. Louis Napoleon rang for a courier, gave him fifteen napoleons, and ordered him to be in Gloucester in twenty-four hours. Potter proposed to go to his hotel, write out

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the bulk of his energy and all his intellectual keenness in the administration of public companies and in financial speculations. For some years he was chairman of the Great Western Railway of England; for ten years, just the years of my girlhood, he was president of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada. Memory recalls a maze of capitalist undertakings of which he was director or promoter; undertakings of every degree of rank and permanence, of success or failure—from high-grade concerns like the Hudson Bay Company and the Dutch Rhenish railways, to humble establishments for the manufacture of railway wagons and

the contract and specification, and return with them. Louis Napoleon said no, they must be written out immediately; that he was going out for a couple of hours, and hoped on his return to find all ready. Potter was thus left two hours alone in Louis Napoleon's cabinet, with all his private papers about. The contract, etc., was ready in two hours, was in Gloucester on Sunday, and the workmen were employed in executing it by six o'clock on Monday morning."

When it came to settling the account, my father's experience was reversed. The British Government paid up at once. After making many applications to the French Government, my father betook himself to Paris, but utterly failed to get access to the minister concerned. With a large overdraft at the bank, the financial position became intolerable. Presently his friend Tom Brassey appeared on a like quest but with greater experience of foreign governments. "My dear Potter, what an innocent you are! Go to the Bank of France and cash a cheque for a thousand pounds; give the porter at the ministry twenty francs, and pay your way handsomely until you get to the minister; then put down five hundred pounds and you will get your money all right. Otherwise you will never get it: Great Britain will not go to war with France to get you paid!" My father took the advice. When he was admitted into the minister's presence he put down the equivalent of five hundred pounds. The minister put it in his pocket, said pleasant things about my father's stay in Paris, and signed the requisite papers authorising immediate payment. My father used frequently to ask the more scrupulous of his business associates what they would have done under the circumstances.

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signals. The most far-fetched and risky projects were not excluded from his vision. I remember a concession from the Turkish Government, obtained by him and a group of friends—among them Tom Brassey, the great contractor—to make a Grand Canal through Syria to compete with the Suez Canal; an enterprise abandoned on the report of the engineers that such a canal would not only submerge the Holy places—a small matter—but take forty years to fill. “We are not going to wait forty years for our money to make Potter’s fortune,” said Brassey to Perks and Watkin. There was another scheme for a live-cattle trade between Barrow-in-Furness and the United States, balked by Privy Council orders against cattle disease, or, as my father complained, against free trade in food. Some issues were moral rather than financial. I recollect anxious discussions as to whether he ought to “cover” certain misdoings of the financiers who dominated the board of a great trans-continental railway, by remaining a director, which was settled in the negative; and there was a conscientious refusal to accept the presidency of another Canadian railway because he suspected queer transactions in land on the part of its promoters. But the purest commercial ethics did not always prevail. The German, like the British Government, could not be bribed, but in the transactions with most other foreign governments legislators and officials were paid “for services rendered” without scruple. There were similar ups and downs with regard to the speculative investments: he lost heavily in Welsh coal-mines by buying and selling at the wrong time; he gained considerably by taking up the shares of the Barry Docks before the investing public had become aware of their value. His not infrequent losses were due to an over-sanguine temperament, a too easy-going way with subordinates, and, above all, to a rooted

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distaste for the work of inspection and control. His successes as a money-maker arose from his talent for negotiating new agreements; his genius was, in fact, for planning and not for executing. He had a winning personality, a pleasant voice, a strong will, a clearly conceived aim, and a remarkable faculty for finding the exact form of words which would give him all he wanted without seeming to deny the aims of the other parties. Moreover, he believed in the Jewish maxim—a maxim he often cited—that a bargain is not a good bargain unless it pays both sides.

When I was myself searching for a social creed I used to ponder over the ethics of capitalist enterprise as represented by my father's acts and axioms. He was an honourable and loyal colleague; he retained throughout his life the close friendship of his partners; his co-operation was always being sought for by the other capitalists; he never left a colleague in a tight place; he was generous in giving credit to subordinates; he was forgiving to an old enemy who had fallen on evil times. But he thought, felt and acted in terms of personal relationship and not in terms of general principles; he had no clear vision of the public good. "A friend," he would assert, "is a person who would back you up when you were in the wrong, who would give your son a place which he could not have won on his own merits." Any other conduct he scoffed at as moral pedantry. Hence he tended to prefer the welfare of his family and personal friends to the interests of the companies over which he presided, the profits of these companies to the prosperity of his country, the dominance of his own race to the peace of the world. These graded obligations were, of course, adjusted to the law of the land and to the conventions of the circle in which he was at the time moving. His conception of right conduct was a spacious one, of loose



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texture, easily penetrated by the surrounding moral atmosphere. What he did in the United States he would not do in the United Kingdom. For the circumstances of mid-Victorian capitalist enterprise were hostile to any fixed standard of morality. The presidents of American railways, international financiers, company promoters and contractors, were forceful men, frequently of magnetic personality and witty conversation; but the common ideal which bound them in a close fraternity was a stimulating mixture of personal power and personal luxury; their common recreation was high living. Uniquely typical was the life on board a president's car on an American railway: the elaborate accommodation and fittings; the French chef; the over-abundant food; the extravagantly choice wines and liqueurs; above all, the consciousness of personal prestige and power; the precedence of the president's car over all other traffic; the obsequious attentions of ubiquitous officials; the contemptuous bargaining with political "bosses" for land concessions and for the passage of bills through legislatures—altogether a low moral temperature. My father struggled against this adverse moral environment; he submitted, with childlike docility, and, be it added, with childish delight in evasion, to the dietetic rules imposed on him by his womenkind and the family physician; his insistence on his daughters' company whenever he went abroad was, I think, partly due to a subconscious intention to keep out of less desirable associations. In his struggle with the sins of the world and the flesh (he was never tempted by the devil of pride, cruelty or malice) he had two powerful aids—his wife and his God. His wife was puritan and ascetic, and he adored her. He had been brought up in the arid creed of Unitarianism and he had lived with intellectual iconoclasts; but unlike his wife and some of

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his daughters, he was never troubled with doubts as to the divine government of the world, or as to the reality of communion with an outside spiritual force. He attended church regularly, took the sacrament and prayed night and morning. It seems incredible, but I know that, as a man, he repeated the prayer taught him at his mother's lap—"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child," etc.

As a citizen of the British Empire my father bred true to the typical political development of Victorian capitalism. His grandfather, the Tadcaster farmer and shopkeeper, had had his windows broken by the Tory mob for refusing to illuminate at the reported victory of the British troops over the Americans in their War of Independence; his father, the Manchester cotton warehouseman, was a leading rebel in the days of Peterloo and, as a member of the reformed House of Commons of 1832, he belonged to the Free Trade and pacifist Radical group which made matters lively for the Whig Government. But I doubt whether my father was ever a convinced Radical; and some time in the 'sixties he left the Reform Club and joined the Carlton. Fervent and long-enduring therefore was his indignation at Disraeli's "treacherous" Reform Act of 1867; from first to last he objected to any extension of the suffrage below the £10 householder, in which class he wished to include women householders, women being, as he thought, more intuitively Conservative than men. The central article of his political faith was, indeed, a direct denial of democracy: an instinctive conviction, confirmed as he thought by his experience of American institutions, that the rulers of the country, whether Cabinet Ministers or judges, permanent heads of Government Departments or Members of Parliament, ought in the main to be drawn from a leisured class—all the better

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if the property upon which the leisure depended was inherited property. The political and municipal corruption of the United States of America was, he maintained, due to the absence of an hereditary caste of leisured persons standing, as trustees for the permanent prosperity of the country, above the struggle for existence, whether of wage-earners or profit-makers. Even more disastrous was the replacing of this caste by political bosses elected by a mob of propertyless persons, but drawing their incomes from particular financial and industrial corporations. "The American boss," he said, "combines the ignorance of the labourer with the graft of the company promoter." But he was always ready to compromise with new forces and to adjust his political programme to social circumstances. When once the suffrage had been lowered he became enthusiastic about working-class education. "We must educate our masters," he was never tired of asserting. "If necessary we must send our daughters to educate the masses," was an indiscreet remark at a political meeting, which shocked the Conservatives and infuriated the Radicals. Unlike my mother, he had no use for the abstract principles of political economy; his father's old friends, Cobden and Bright, he regarded as fanatics deceiving themselves and others with wire-drawn logic and moral platitudes. Some sliding-scale tax on corn ought to have been maintained so as to preserve and stabilise an agricultural population. As for "peace at any price," any experienced business man knew that, broadly speaking, "trade followed the flag!"

Notwithstanding frequent absence, my father was the central figure of the family life—the light and warmth of the home. How well I remember how we girls raced to the front door when we heard the wheels on the carriage drive:

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the eager questions, the cheery replies, however tired he might be. He worshipped his wife, he admired and loved his daughters; he was the only man I ever knew who genuinely believed that women were superior to men, and acted as if he did; the paradoxical result being that all his nine daughters started life as anti-feminists! He made his wife and daughters his confidantes in all his undertakings, or at any rate he seemed to do so. In spite of his business preoccupations he had retained a love of poetry, of the drama, of history and of idealistic philosophy; he was a devout student of Dante (in the original), of Shakespeare and of Plato; he taught us to appreciate the eighteenth-century humorists and the French encyclopædists and the novels of Jane Austen and Thackeray; he was a fanatical admirer of Burke and Carlyle and John Henry Newman—an oddly assorted trio, proving, I think, that his preferences were inspired by emotional thought rather than by pure reason. He always talked to us as equals; he would discuss with his daughters, even when they were young girls, not only his business affairs, but also religion, politics and the problems of sex, with frankness and freedom. I remember asking him at the age of thirteen whether he advised me to read *Tom Jones*. "By all means read it, if it interests you; it will give you a good idea of the manners and customs of the eighteenth century, and Fielding wrote splendidly virile English"; to which he added, as if thinking aloud, "If you were a boy I should hesitate to recommend *Tom Jones*, but a nice-minded girl can read anything; and the more she knows about human nature the better for her and for all the men connected with her." Perhaps as a consequence of this policy of the "open door" I recollect no curiosity about sex: my knowledge of the facts always outrunning my interest in the subject. He delighted in the

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beauty of moor and mountain, in wild winds and the changing hues of cloud and sea. But his peculiar charm lay in his appreciation—his over-appreciation of the intellect and character of those with whom he lived. We girls thought him far too long-suffering of mother's arbitrary moods; she thought him far too acquiescent in his daughters' unconventional habits. Yet in spite of this habitual self-subordination to those he loved, notwithstanding his "noble amiability," to use an epithet of Herbert Spencer's, he controlled the family destinies. My mother lived where it suited him to live, and he came and went as he chose; his daughters married the sort of men he approved, notwithstanding many temptations to the contrary.

My mother was nearing forty years of age when I became aware of her existence, and it was not until the last years of her life, when I was the only grown-up daughter remaining in the home, that I became intimate with her. The birth of an only brother when I was four, and his death when I was seven years of age, the crowning joy and devastating sorrow of my mother's life, had separated me from her care and attention; and the coming of my youngest sister, a few months after my brother's death, a partial outlet for my mother's wounded feelings, completed our separation. "Beatrice," she wrote in a diary when I was yet a child, "is the only one of my children who is below the average in intelligence," which may explain her attitude of indifference. Throughout my childhood and youth she seemed to me a remote personage discussing business with my father or poring over books in her boudoir; a source of arbitrary authority whose rare interventions in my life I silently resented. I regarded her as an obstacle to be turned, as a person from whom one withheld facts and whose temper

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one watched and humoured so that she should not interfere with one's own little plans. This absence of affection between us was all the more pitiful because, as we eventually discovered, we had the same tastes, we were puzzling over the same problems; and she had harboured, deep down in her heart, right up to middle life, the very ambition that I was secretly developing, the ambition to become a publicist.

My mother's pilgrimage through life was a much harder one than my father's. She had started life heavily handicapped by the unqualified indulgence and adoration of a wealthy widowed father, who insisted on her brothers regarding her as a paragon of virtue, beauty and learning—a perilous ordeal even for a selfless nature. Fortunately for her happiness, and I think also for her character, she found the same unqualified adoration in marriage; and she and my father remained lovers to the day of her death. In all other aspects her life had been one long series of disappointments. She had visualised a home life of close intellectual comradeship with my father, possibly of intellectual achievement, surrounded by distinguished friends, of whom she had many as a girl and young married woman (among them I recollect the names of Sir George Cornewall Lewis and Dr. Jeune). This vision of a life of learned leisure was rudely swept on one side by the loss of the unearned income. When wealth returned it found her an invalid, with a nursery full of children, and a husband who was preoccupied and constantly away.

But her great disillusionment was in her children. She had been reared by and with men, and she disliked women. She was destined to have nine daughters and to lose her only son. Moreover, her daughters were not the sort of women she admired or approved. She had been brought

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up "a scholar and a gentlewoman": her daughters refused to be educated and defied caste conventions. For the most part they were unmistakably Potters, the descendants of the tall dark woman of Jewish type who read Hebrew and loved music—my father's mother, whose confinement in a lunatic asylum during the latter years of my grandfather Potter's life (she was obsessed by the mania of leading the Jews back to Jerusalem and actually got as far as Paris, alas! poor lady, alone and without her fancied following) was always referred to as a slur on our birth. But besides these untoward circumstances, my mother was cursed with a divided personality; she was not at peace in herself. The discords in her nature were reflected in her physiognomy. In profile, she was, if not ugly, lacking grace: a prominent nose with an aggressive bridge, a long straight upper lip, a thin-lipped and compressed mouth, a powerful chin and jaw, altogether a hard outline, not redeemed by a well-shaped but large head. Looked at thus, she was obviously a managing woman, unrelenting, probably domineering, possibly fanatical. But her full face showed any such interpretation of her character to be a ludicrous libel. Here the central feature, the soul of the personality, were the eyes, soft hazel brown, large but deeply set, veiled by overhanging lids and long eyelashes set off by delicately curved and pencilled eyebrows: eyes uniting in their light and shade the caress of sympathy with the quest of knowledge. To this outstanding beauty were added fine flossy hair, an easily flushed fair skin, small flashing teeth, a low musical voice, pretty gestures and long delicate hands: clearly a woman to charm, perhaps to inspire. "I think you knew my grandfather, Lawrence Heyworth," said I to John Bright when I met him at a political demonstration at Birmingham in 1884—three years after my mother's death.

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“Lawrence Heyworth, yes. Then you are the daughter of Laurencina Heyworth?” And after a pause he added—  
“One of the two or three women a man remembers to the end of life as beautiful in expression and form.” [MS. diary, March 16, 1884.]

As I discovered during the few years of intimacy, the divided personality reflected in the diverse testimony of profile and full face was manifested in consciousness by a never-ending controversy relating, not only to man's relation to the universe, but also to the right conduct of life. Her soul longed for the mystical consolations and moral discipline of religious orthodoxy. She spent hours studying the Greek Testament and the Fathers of the Church; and she practised religious rites with exemplary regularity. But she had inherited from her father an iconoclastic intellect. I remember as a wee child being startled by my grandfather Heyworth's assertion that Adam and Eve, so long as they lingered in the Garden of Eden, were roaming pigs, and that it was only by eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge that their descendants became something more than beasts of the field. What troubled my mother was the doubt whether men and women *had* become, or were becoming, more than pigs, however much they buried their snouts in the heaped-up apples of the tree of knowledge; whether seeking pleasure and avoiding pain did not sum up all human instincts, impulses and motives, and thus constitute the whole duty of man. An ardent student of Adam Smith, Malthus, and particularly of Nassau Senior, she had been brought up in the strictest sect of Utilitarian economists. In middle life she had translated some of the essays of her friend Michel Chevalier, who represented the French variant of orthodox political economy, a variant which caricatured the dogmatic faith in a beneficent self-



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interest.<sup>1</sup> And my mother practised what she preached. Tested by economy in money and time she was an admirable expeditor of the family income: she never visited the servants' quarters and seldom spoke to any servant other than her own maid. She acted by deputy, training each daughter to carry out a carefully thought-out plan of the most economical supply of the best-regulated demand. Her intellect told her that to pay more than the market rate, to exact fewer than the customary hours or insist on less than the usual strain—even if it could be proved that these conditions were injurious to the health and happiness of the persons concerned—was an act of self-indulgence, a defiance of nature's laws which would bring disaster on the individual and the community. Similarly, it was the bounden duty of every citizen to better his social status; to ignore those beneath him, and to aim steadily at the top rung of the social ladder. Only by this persistent pursuit by each individual of his own and his family's interest would the highest general level of civilisation be attained. It was on this issue that she and Herbert Spencer found themselves in happy accord. No one of the present

<sup>1</sup> The following description of my mother, given by her friend Michel Chevalier to his friend Taine, the historian, appears in *Notes on England*, by H. Taine, trans. by W. F. Rae 1872 (p. 93): "M. —, being invited to the country, discovered that the mistress of the house knew much more Greek than himself, apologised, and retired from the field; then, out of pleasantry, she wrote down his English sentence in Greek. Note that this female Hellenist is a woman of the world, and even stylish. Moreover, she has nine daughters, two nurses, two governesses, servants in proportion, a large, well-appointed house, frequent and numerous visitors; throughout all this, perfect order; never noise or fuss; the machine appears to move of its own accord. These are gatherings of faculties and of contrasts which might make us reflect. In France we believe too readily that if a woman ceases to be a doll she ceases to be a woman."

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generation realises with what sincerity and fervour these doctrines were held by the representative men and women of the mid-Victorian middle class. "The man who sells his cow too cheap goes to hell" still epitomises, according to John Butler Yeats, "the greater part of the religion of Belfast"—that last backwater of the sanctimonious commercialism of the nineteenth century. My mother's distinction was that she was free of the taint of hypocrisy; she realised the hopeless inconsistency of this theory of human nature and human conduct with her mystical cravings, either with the Sermon on the Mount or with the *Imitation of Christ*, which she read night and morning. In the latter years of her life she withdrew from social intercourse, and left her daughters free to make their own way in London Society and to entertain their own friends in the country home; merely asking to be told the names of the guests, and to be provided with clues enabling her to carry out the formal duties of hostess with intelligent courtesy. As age crept on, even the desire to impose her will on the rest of the household fell from her, and she became pathetically eager to subordinate her claims to those of the growing nurseries of grandchildren. More and more absorbed in her lonely studies and despairing of solving the problems which troubled her, her restless intellect fastened on the acquisition of languages, more especially their grammars. Of these grammars she made a curious and extensive collection, preferring the grammar of one foreign language in that of another; a Greek grammar in French, a Latin grammar in Italian, a Hebrew grammar in German, and a Spanish grammar in some Scandinavian language, and so on; according to the principle, I imagine, that it is economical to acquire two things with one unit of energy.

<sup>1</sup> *Early Memories*, by John Butler Yeats, p. 48.

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It was in this day-to-day, routine mental activity, one day exactly like another, that she attained a certain peaceful understanding of life, nay more, a zest in living, which left her at the age of sixty amazingly young alike in body and mind. "I shall know twelve languages before I die," said she to me with a triumphant smile, as, a few months before her sudden and unexpected death in the spring of 1882, we paced up and down the measured span of gravel walk for a measured hour. This self-congratulation was quickly followed by a caressing glance and a sympathetic suggestion that I might succeed where she had failed, and become a writer of books.

Whether it was the result of this new and unexpected sympathy with my secret ambition, or whether it was due to some subtly potent quality in her personality, she exercised a far greater influence over my life after her death than while she was living.

I never knew how much she had done for me [I wrote remorsefully in my diary a few months after her death], how many of my best habits I had taken from her, how strong would be the influence of her personality when pressure had gone—a pressure wholesome and in the right direction, but applied without tact. Tact—that quality which gains for people more affection and consideration than any other and yet in itself not one necessarily belonging to the noblest group of moral and intellectual qualities. . . . When I work with many odds against me, for a far distant and perhaps unattainable end, I think of her and her intellectual strivings which we were too ready to call useless, and which yet will be the originating impulse of all my ambition, urging me onward towards something better in action and thought. [MS. diary, August 13, 1882.]

Six years afterwards, when my life was divided between nursing my father and contributing chapters to Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London*, I find the following entry in my diary, showing how closely my

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intellectual effort had become associated with the memory of my mother.

These latter days [I] constantly think of mother: sometimes the feeling of her presence is so strong that I am tempted into a kind of communion with her. We knew each other so little in her lifetime. Strangely enough I love her better now, I feel that she at last knows me, tries to cheer my loneliness and to encourage my effort. She seems now to belong more to me than to the others; the others have their husbands and their children: I have nothing but my work and the fitful warmth of friendship. So mother seems to stand by my side, to be watching me, anxious to reach out to me a helping hand; at any rate to bless me. . . . I can fight through the rest of the battle of life with courage. And perhaps when it is over, I shall know that she has been by my side. [MS. diary, 1888.]

Inseparably associated with my mother, and in many respects her complement, was Martha Jackson (afterwards Mills), my mother's lifelong companion and attendant. Engaged by my grandfather to accompany his daughter on her travels, she had witnessed the love-making in Rome; she had followed my mother into married life, and she had acted as nurse to my elder sisters, thus acquiring the nickname of "Dada." Now Dada was a saint, the one and only saint I ever knew. She mothered all the members of the large household, whether children or servants, whether good or naughty; she nursed them when they were ill, comforted them when they were in trouble, and spoke for them when they were in disgrace. It was Martha who was called into counsel by my father in hours of friction and stress; it was she alone who dared, unasked but unreprieved, to counsel my mother whenever she—Martha—thought fit. "I would not do that, Mrs. Potter, it will only cause more trouble," she would say in her low impersonal tone, as she went about her business carrying out my mother's orders, apparently unconcerned with the result even if she dis-

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approved the decision. And when my mother vehemently reasserted her will, and argued hotly that she was in the right, Martha would remain blandly silent as if half convinced, presently making a soothing reference to the frailty or helplessness of the other party to the dispute, or some shrewd suggestion as to how the practical problem could be solved to the advantage of everybody. But in spite of this all-inclusive benevolence it was difficult to deceive her. Cut deep in my memory is a scene of sixty years ago: a small child telling a cowardly lie, a moment of silence and then, as the sole response, a flash in her grey eyes of mingled amusement and love: the small child resolving not to tell another lie if only she could wriggle out of this one without confessing the double sin!

Though Martha was a saint she was a very human one, capable of taking a false step so far as her own happiness was concerned. In middle life, weary perhaps of continuously giving and never receiving solicitous affection, she got married. By profession a railway guard who became a butler, by preference a local preacher among the Baptists, Mills was a portly figure of a man, honest and domesticated. For some years he preferred to remain with an old and wealthy master, and acquiesced in his wife staying with us, being greatly concerned to accumulate an independence. When the old master died a disastrous break in our household seemed inevitable. My mother and Martha rose to the occasion. Mills became our butler; he would have become the butt of the household if it had not been for the quiet dignity of his wife, who mothered and protected him, as she mothered and protected all the other members of the household. But she knew she had made a big mistake, the mistake of her life, and shrewd and sharp were her warnings to the younger servants when they consulted her

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about "getting married." For Mills was a ludicrously pompous person, preposterously pleased with the sound of his own voice. If one rang the bell for another scuttle of coal, Mills appeared in the middle of the room and stood and delivered a set speech, repeating your request and adding his comments in grandiloquent language. In the misuse of pedantic words and phrases he travestied Mrs. Malaprop; whilst the rhetorical paraphrase of Biblical texts, out of which he compiled his amateur sermons, seemed heart-stirring eloquence or mere muddle-mindedness according to the degree of literacy in the listener. "Mills would be all right if he would keep his mouth shut," muttered the disillusioned but devoted wife on the occasion of a Christmas dinner.

Eventually the couple retired on savings and pensions to the lodge of our Monmouthshire farmhouse, where my father and I spent the summer months during the last years of his life. On this lonely hill-top Mills found his vocation in attracting, by his ornate oratory, little groups of bemused labourers to deserted Baptist chapels, whilst Martha washed, mended and cooked for him, read her Bible, opened and closed the gate, and awaited with patient eagerness the arrival of one or other of the beloved family. Meanwhile, as luck would have it, and as I shall tell in another chapter, Martha had become my guide and "cover" in my first attempt at observation and experiment. It was she who, after my mother's death, introduced me as her "young friend, Miss Jones, a farmer's daughter from Wales," into the homes of my cousins, the Bacup cotton operatives; and it was incidentally during this visit that I discovered that she, also, was a relative.

The most far-reaching and influential of Martha's gifts was her revelation of the meaning of the religious spirit.'

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Fresh from listening to my mother's interminable arguments with Herbert Spencer concerning the origin of religion, Martha's formal creed, that of a Particular Baptist, seemed to me primitive if not barbaric. But she held the dogmas of the atonement, predestination, eternal punishment and of the literal infallibility of the Old and New Testament, not to mention the Protestant assumption that the Roman Catholic Church was the "Scarlet Woman" of Revelation, humbly and without question, as an act of loyalty to the faith in which she had been reared. Religion meant to her from beginning to end a state of mind, a state of mind which she believed reflected the state of mind of her Saviour Jesus of Nazareth, an overpowering consciousness of love. It was a strangely impersonal love; if I may so phrase it, it was an equalitarian beneficence without respect for persons or even for the characteristics of persons: it was manifested quite indifferently to all human beings, whether they were attractive or hideous, of high or low degree, geniuses or mental defectives, nobly self-sacrificing or meanly egotistical. Instinctively she gave her sympathy and care not according to merits, but according to needs. Faults in character and faults in circumstances were inevitable incidents in the pilgrim's way through this life to the next, only to be overcome or smoothed out by a patient and persistent charity to all human beings, tempered by what she called "facing the facts." For she never gushed or sentimentalised over those she helped through physical or mental trouble; her sympathy was always tempered by a sense of humour and a sense of proportion, by an appreciation of the equities of the case. "There are other people's needs and claims besides yours," her smile and flashing eye would seem to say. She seldom spoke of her religious experiences and she never tried to convert us to her particular brand of

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Protestant Christianity. Yet it was evident to all who knew her intimately that she held, with radiant conviction, that the state of mind which was to her religion could only be created and maintained by communion with an outside spiritual force, itself a manifestation of the spirit of love at work in the universe.

At the other end of the scale of human values, and in significant contrast with the household saint—in intellect towering above her, but in emotional insight depths below her—stood the oldest and most intimate friend of the family, the incessantly ratiocinating philosopher. From Herbert Spencer's *Autobiography* I take the following description of his first meeting with my parents at my grandfather Heyworth's house near Liverpool, not for the flattering family portraits, but because this extract proves that the future thinker was, in his youth, as modest about his own gifts as he was enthusiastically appreciative of those of his friends.

Mr. Heyworth and I had a great deal of conversation, and on the whole agreed remarkably well in our sentiments. He is a particularly liberal-minded and thinking man, and, though nominally a Churchman, is practically no more one than I am myself. . . . I was, however, most highly pleased with his daughter, and her husband—Mr. and Mrs. Potter. They have been lately married, and appear to me the most admirable pair I have ever seen. I don't know whether you have ever heard me mention Miss Heyworth as being somewhat of a notability. I have, however, been for some time past curious to see her, partly in consequence of the very high terms in which my uncle Thomas has always spoken of her, and partly because I have once or twice seen her name mentioned in the papers as one who was very zealous in the anti-corn law agitation, engaging herself in distributing tracts and conversing with persons on the subject.

It would never be inferred from her manner and general appearance that she possessed so independent a character. She is perfectly feminine and has an unusually graceful and refined manner. To a phrenologist, however, the singularity of the



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character is very obvious. [Here follow a profile outline of her head and a set of inferences.]

Mr. Potter, however, commanded my highest admiration. He is, I think, the most lovable being I have yet seen. He is evidently genuine. His amiability is not that of manner but that of reality. He has a noble head—a democratic one, of course, but one so beautifully balanced in other respects that one can quite delight in contemplating it. The perfect agreement between his head and face is remarkable: the features are Grecian and their expression is exactly what a phrenologist would anticipate.

He is, I believe, very poetical—admires Shelley enthusiastically and conceives him by far the finest poet of his era, in which I quite coincide with him. In fact we sympathised in our sentiments on all subjects on which we conversed, and although I might feel somewhat flattered by this, I must say I felt so strongly the beauty of his disposition as contrasted with my own, that I felt more dissatisfied with myself than I have done for a long time past.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography*, Herbert Spencer, 1904, vol. i. pp. 260–61. Herbert Spencer adds: "The friendship thus initiated lasted until the deaths of both. It influenced to a considerable extent the current of my life; and, through their children and grandchildren, influences it still." And here is one among many entries in my diary descriptive of my father, written two years after my mother's death:

"The grand simplicity of his nature, his motives transparent and uncomplicated—all resolvable indeed into one—desire to make those belonging to him happy. Read to me yesterday some of his journal in Rome when he was courting mother. Just the same mind as now: uncritical reverence for what was beautiful and good: no trace of cynicism or desire to analyse or qualify. Perhaps in his business career, in business matters, he has developed a shrewdness and sharpness of thought and action, and with it a cynical depreciation of men and their ways. But this is foreign to his nature, has been acquired in the struggle for existence, and never enters into his intimate relationships. With him the instinctive feelings are paramount. He would sacrifice all, to some extent even his self-respect, if he thought the happiness of some loved one were at stake. His is far away the most unselfish nature and most unself-conscious nature I know." [MS. diary, May 16, 1883.]

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From that day Herbert Spencer remained my father's ardent admirer and my mother's intellectual associate. That the man of twenty-four should have enjoyed talking for hours together with an attractive woman a few years older than himself is not to be wondered at. What is surprising is that Herbert Spencer's admiration, I might almost say adoration, of my father, should have survived the latter's complete indifference to the working of the philosopher's intellect, whether expressed in the spoken or the written word. Always cheerfully beneficent, my father had a genuine if somewhat pitying affection for the philosopher on the hearth; he would walk with him, he would fish with him, he would travel with him, he would give him sound advice and tell him tales from business life which illustrated the working of this or that economic "law" in which they both believed; but argue with him or read his books he would not. "Won't work, my dear Spencer, won't work," my father would say good-humouredly, when the professional doubter defiantly proclaimed his practice on a Sunday morning of deliberately walking against the tide of church-goers. This distaste for Herbert Spencer's peculiar type of reasoning was all the more noteworthy because my father enjoyed intellectual society; he delighted in talks with Huxley, Tyndall and James Martineau, and when his friend James Anthony Froude asked him on one or two occasions to join the afternoon walk with Thomas Carlyle he did so in the spirit of reverential awe, repeating to us afterwards the very words of the master. But Herbert Spencer's "synthetic philosophy," whether it concerned the knowable or the unknowable, bored him past endurance; he saw no sense in it. When I tried to interest him in the "law of increasing heterogeneity and definiteness in structure and function" at work

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—so the philosopher demonstrated—throughout the universe, my father answered in this wise: “Words, my dear, mere words. Experience tells me that some businesses grow diverse and complicated, others get simpler and more uniform, others again go into the Bankruptcy Court. In the long run and over the whole field there is no more reason for expecting one process rather than the other. Spencer’s intellect is like a machine racing along without raw material: it is wearing out his body. Poor Spencer, he lacks instinct, my dear, he lacks instinct—you will discover that instinct is as important as intellect.” And then, taking out his engagement book, he added, in a more sympathetic tone, “I must see whether I can’t arrange another day’s fishing with him—poor man.” Nor was my father’s indifference to his reasoning power unnoticed by Herbert Spencer. “Mrs. Potter was scarcely less argumentative than I was,” he recounts after a visit to the young couple, “and occasionally our evening debates were carried on so long that Mr. Potter, often playing chiefly the rôle of listener, gave up in despair and went to bed; leaving us to continue our unsettleable controversies.”<sup>1</sup>

Memory recalls a finely sculptured head, prematurely bald, long stiff upper lip and powerful chin, obstinately compressed mouth, small sparkling grey eyes, set close together, with a prominent Roman nose—altogether a remarkable headpiece dominating a tall, spare, well-articulated figure, tapering off into diminutive and well-formed hands and feet. Always clad in primly neat but quaintly unconventional garments, there was distinction, even a certain elegance, in the philosopher’s punctilious manners and precise and lucid speech. And if his elaborate

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography*, Herbert Spencer, 1904, vol. i. p. 311 (æ. 26, 1846).

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explanations, couched in pedantic terms, of commonplace occurrences as exemplifications of the recondite principles of the synthetic philosophy, seemed to the Philistine listener just a trifle absurd, to the enthusiastic novice in scientific reasoning his ingenious intertwining of elementary observations with abstruse ratiocination was immensely impressive. But the sharpest imprint on my youthful mind was the transformation scene from the placid beneficence of an unwrinkled brow, an aspect habitual towards children and all weak things, to an attitude of tremulous exasperation, angry eyes and voice almost shrewish in its shrillness—when he “opined” that his or any one else’s personal rights were being infringed. To the children of the household the philosopher always appeared in the guise of a liberator. His delightful axiom “submission not desirable” was adorned and pointed by detailed criticism of the ways of governesses and other teachers: “stupid persons who taught irrelevant facts in an unintelligible way,” a criticism which made even my mother uneasy, and which infuriated the old-fashioned dame who presided for many years over the activities of the schoolroom. “You can go out this morning, my dears, with Mr. Spencer,” said the governess to her pupils, after listening with pursed-up lips to one of the philosopher’s breakfast tirades against discipline, “and mind you follow his teaching and do exactly what you have a mind to.” Whether due to an “undesirable submissiveness” to the governess or to a ready acquiescence in the doctrine of revolt, the philosopher found himself presently in a neighbouring beech wood pinned down in a leaf-filled hollow by little demons, all legs, arms, grins and dancing dark eyes, whilst the elder and more discreet tormentors pelted him with decaying beech leaves. “Your children are r-r-rude children,” exclaimed the *Man versus the State*

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as he stalked into my mother's boudoir. But for the most part he and we were firm friends: we agreed with his denunciation of the "current curriculum," history, foreign languages, music and drawing, and his preference for "science"—a term which meant, in practice, scouring the countryside in his company for fossils, flowers and water-beasties which, alive, mutilated or dead, found their way into hastily improvised aquariums, cabinets and scrap-books—all alike discarded when his visit was over. Speaking for myself I was never interested in these collections of animate and inanimate things, even when looked at through his microscope or pulled to pieces by teasers. What fascinated me, long before I began to study his writings, was watching him collect illustrations for his theories. I do not suggest that "some direct observations of facts or some fact met with in reading" did not precede the formulation of his principles: though it appears from an interesting account given in the *Autobiography*, that only those facts were noted and contemplated which had to him some "general meaning," i.e. directly or indirectly helped towards the building up of "a coherent and organised theory" of the universe. But by the time I became his companion these "First Principles" had ceased to be hypotheses; they had become a highly developed dogmatic creed with regard to the evolution of life. What remained to be done was to prove by innumerable illustrations how these principles or "laws" explained the whole of the processes of nature, from the formation of a crystal to the working of the party system within a democratic state. Herbert Spencer was, in fact, engaged in the art of casuistry, and it was in this art that for a time I became his apprentice, or was it his accomplice? Partly in order to gain his approbation and partly out of sheer curiosity about the working of his

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mind, I started out to discover, and where observation failed, to invent, illustrations of such scraps of theory as I understood. What I learnt from this game with his intellect was not, it is needless to remark, how to observe—for he was the most gullible of mortals and never scrutinised the accuracy of my tales—but whether the sample facts I brought him came within the “law” he wished to illustrate. It was indeed the training required for an English lawyer dealing with cases, rather than that of a scientific worker seeking to discover and describe new forms of life. What he taught me to discern was not the truth, but the relevance of facts; a gift said to be rare in a woman and of untold importance to the social investigator confronted with masses of data, whether in documents or in the observed behaviour of men—ascertained facts significant and insignificant, relevant and irrelevant. And it so happens that I find in my diary an authoritative confirmation of this appreciation of Herbert Spencer’s intellectual processes in a conversation with Professor Huxley in 1887, when I was considering my old friend’s request that I should act as his literary executor.

I ventured to put forward the idea [I record], that Herbert Spencer had worked out the theory of evolution by grasping the disjointed theories of his time and welding them into one. “No,” said Huxley, “Spencer never knew them: he elaborated his theory from his inner consciousness. He is the most original of thinkers, though he has never invented a new thought. He never reads: merely picks up what will help him to illustrate his theories. He is a great constructor: the form he has given to his gigantic system is entirely original: not one of the component factors is new, but he has not borrowed them.” And we disagreed on another point. I suggested that as I had known Herbert Spencer he was personally humble. Both the Huxleys exclaimed: they had always found him pre-eminently just; ready to listen to adverse criticism and adverse facts from those he

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respected or had affection for. But most men were to him the common herd. Perhaps there is truth in this. I asked Huxley whether he thought it was a mistake for me to undertake the literary executorship. "Oh no," said the great man benignly, "all a man wants in a literary executor is a sympathetic friend." Herbert Spencer's biography tells its own story: it is intensely characteristic of the man.<sup>1</sup>

In the next chapter I shall refer to the part played in the development of my craft and creed by Herbert Spencer's

<sup>1</sup> MS. diary, May 6, 1887. The remainder of the entry may be of interest to the reader, though as I was only slightly acquainted with the great scientist my casual observation is of little value.

"Throughout the interview, what interested me was not Huxley's opinion of Spencer, but Huxley's account of himself. . . . How as a young man, though he had no definite purpose in life, he felt power; was convinced that in his own line he would be a leader. That expresses Huxley: he is a leader of men. I doubt whether science was pre-eminently the bent of his mind. He is truth-loving, his love of truth finding more satisfaction in demolition than in construction. He throws the full weight of thought, feeling, will, into anything that he takes up. He does not register his thoughts and his feelings: his early life was supremely sad, and he controlled the tendency to look back on the past and forward into the future. When he talks to man, woman or child he seems all attention and he has, or rather had, the power of throwing himself into the thoughts and feelings of others and responding to them. And yet they are all shadows to him: he thinks no more of them and drops back into the ideal world he lives in. For Huxley, when not working, dreams strange things: carries on lengthy conversations between unknown persons living within his brain. There is a strain of madness in him; melancholy has haunted his whole life. 'I always knew that success was so much dust and ashes. I have never been satisfied with achievement.' None of the enthusiasm for what is, or the silent persistency in discovering facts; more the eager rush of the conquering mind, loving the fact of conquest more than the land conquered. And consequently his achievement has fallen far short of his capacity. Huxley is greater as a man than as a scientific thinker. The exact opposite might be said of Herbert Spencer."

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*Synthetic Philosophy.* Here I express the debt I owe to the loyal friendship and mutual helpfulness which grew up between the child and the thinker; and which endured, undimmed by growing divergence in opinion, to the day of his death in 1903. It was the philosopher on the hearth who, alone among my elders, was concerned about my chronic ill-health, and was constantly suggesting this or that remedy for my ailments; who encouraged me in my lonely studies; who heard patiently and criticised kindly my untutored scribbles about Greek and German philosophers; who delighted and stimulated me with the remark that I was a "born metaphysician," and that I "reminded him of George Eliot"; who was always pressing me to become a scientific worker, and who eventually arranged with Knowles of the *Nineteenth Century* for the immediate publication of my first essay in social investigation.

Even more important for the young student than these acts of personal kindness was the example of continuous concentrated effort in carrying out, with an heroic disregard of material prosperity and physical comfort, a task which he believed would further human progress. There is indeed no limit to what I owe to my thirty or forty years' intimacy with this unique life: unique, as I came to see, no less as a warning than as a model. Here I can do no more than add by way of illustration one or two of the many entries in my diary descriptive of my friendship with Herbert Spencer.

Mr. Spencer's visits always interest me and leave me with new ideas and the clearing up of old ones. Also with due realisation of the poverty of my intellect, and its incapacity for tackling the problems which are constantly cropping up—the comparative uselessness of all my miserable little studies. [MS. diary, September 1881.]



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Spent the whole day with Herbert Spencer at private view. He worked out, poor man, a sad destiny for one whose whole life has been his work. There is something pathetic in the isolation of his mind, a sort of spider-like existence; sitting alone in the centre of his theoretical web, catching facts, and weaving them again into theory. It is sorrowful when the individual is lost in the work—when he has been set apart to fulfil some function, and then when working days are past left as the husk, the living kernel of which has been given to the world. On looking around and watching men and women, one sees how important a part “instinct” plays in their lives, how all-important it becomes in old age, when the purely intellectual faculties grow dim; and one appreciates the barrenness of an old age where the instinctive feelings are undeveloped and the subject-matter for them absent. There is a look of sad resignation on Herbert Spencer’s face, as if he fully realised his position and waited patiently for the end, to him absolutely final. To me there is a comic pathos in his elaborate search after pleasurable “sensations,” as if sensations can *ever* take the place of emotion; and alas! in his consciousness there hardly exists an “exciting cause” for emotional feeling. And yet there is a capacity for deep feeling, a capacity which has lain dormant and is now covered up with crotchety ideas presenting a hedgehog’s coat to the outer world, a surface hardly inviting contact! I see what it is in him which is repulsive to some persons. It is the mental deformity which results from the extraordinary development of the intellectual faculties joined with the very imperfect development of the sympathetic and emotional qualities, a deformity which, when it does not excite pity, excites dislike. There is no life of which I have a really intimate knowledge which seems to me so inexpressibly sad as the inarticulate life of Herbert Spencer, inarticulate in all that concerns his happiness. [MS. diary, May 5, 1884.]

Herbert Spencer deliciously conscious about the “Miss Evans” episode—asked me seriously what was my impression of their relationship on reading those passages referring to him. Had wished John Cross to insert contradiction that there had ever been aught between them. Shows his small-mindedness in the extreme concern. But as George Eliot says, his friendship

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will always endure because of his truthfulness. Told me that he never talked or wrote differently to different people; he was only anxious to express correctly what *he* thought—quite independently of the way in which it would best be understood by others.<sup>1</sup> [MS. diary, January 1885.]

Poor Herbert Spencer. On reading the proof of his *Autobiography* I often think of that life given up to feeling his pulse and analysing his sensations, with no near friends to be all and all to him, to give him the tenderness and brightness that father gets in these his last days. Strange that he should never have felt the sacrifice he was making. . . . “I was never in love,” he answered, when I put the question straight: “Were you never conscious of the wholesale sacrifice you were making, did you never long for those other forms of thought, feeling, action you were shut out from?” Strange—a nature with so perfect an intellect and little else—save friendliness and the uprightness of a truth-loving mind. He has sometimes told me sadly that he has wondered at the weakness of his feelings, even of friendship, and towards old friends and relations; that he thought it came from his mind being constantly busied with the perfection of this one idea—never once doubting the value of it. [MS. diary, June 9, 1886.]

“In November 1887,” he writes in his *Autobiography*, “I was induced by Miss Beatrice Potter to take rooms in the same house with them at Bournemouth, where they were fixed for the winter (my friend Potter having also now become an invalid).”

“Outward circumstances are sad enough at the present time,” I write on this Christmas Day of 1887, “Father sweet as ever, but his mind failing rapidly, his companionship nought but answering disjointed questions. . . . The old philosopher downstairs to whom I am tied by pity and reverential gratitude, the victim of a strange disease of mind and body, sits in his chair not daring to move body or mind; one day passes like another and yet no improvement; he waiting with despondent patience for returning

<sup>1</sup> It was an open secret that it was George Eliot who was in love with the philosopher, and when, on her death, newspaper paragraphs appeared implying that he had been one of her suitors he consulted my father about publishing the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. “My dear Spencer, you will be eternally damned if you do it,” replied my father.

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strength, pursued by the desire to finish his *System of Philosophy*. I can give him no help. I sit in his room writing or reading, now and again saying some kind word—a bright anecdote or a stray reflection. Yesterday as I sat there I heard a sudden moan as if he were in pain. ‘Are you suffering?’ ‘No,’ groaned the poor old man, ‘a momentary fit of impatience. Why suffer more to-days?’ a question I could not answer.” [MS. diary, December 1887.]

“The change of scene, and still more the presence close at hand of those about whom I cared, produced a great effect”; he continues in his *Autobiography*,<sup>1</sup> “and at the end of January 1888 I returned to town, frequented the Athenæum daily for a month, and even got so far as playing a game of billiards. Then, as usual, came a catastrophe,” [and so on].

But the episode of my literary executorship is perhaps the most characteristic of these entries.

Paid Herbert Spencer a visit. Found him in a pitiable condition: hopeless: thinks he can neither eat, work nor talk. Sent me away after I had spoken to him for a short time, and told me to return to him in an hour’s time as he wished to discuss an important business matter. When I returned I found him in a nervous state with a good deal of suppressed excitement. He asked me whether I should recommend A. C. or C. B. as a trustee for the continuance of his sociological research. Advised A. C. He then said he wanted to consult me as to another appointment: that of “Beatrice Potter as literary executor.” I was taken aback, but it was evident that he had set his heart on it and longed, poor old man, that someone who cared for him should write his life. I was very much touched by his confidence, though I suggested he might find a fitter person from a literary point of view. I quite understand his feeling. He instinctively feels that his life seems lonely and deserted, and that the world will look back on him as a thinking machine and not as a man with a man’s need for a woman’s devotion and love, and the living affection of children. Poor old man, he is paying the penalty of genius: his whole nature is twisted by excessive development of one faculty. [MS. diary, April 22, 1887.]

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography*, Herbert Spencer, 1904, vol. ii. p. 412.

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"Dear B.—What admirable promptness," he writes on April 24, 1887. "I expected several days at least to elapse before getting a reply, and here I get letters settling the matter in little more than 24 hours after naming it to you. I give you hearty thanks for having so quickly and well negotiated.

"Pray do not entertain any qualms respecting what you have undertaken. I am perfectly content, and can say with literal truth that with no choice could I have been more content. With the exception of my friend Lott, I cannot think of any one who has had better opportunities of knowing me, and I do not think that even he would have been able to make as good a portrait. For though he had sincerity and catholicity in equal degrees with you, he had not as much perspicacity. Moreover, your criticisms have shown me that you have the instincts of an artist, to which I add the faculty of being lively on fit occasion.

"Before I leave off, which I must do now because my amanuensis wishes to go and see his sick mother, let me express my concern about your health. Losing bulk in the way you have done is a serious symptom. Pray cut off a large part of your work, *and do not dream of doing any work before a substantial breakfast*. Only strong people can do that with impunity.—Ever affectionately yours,

HERBERT SPENCER."

My appointment as his literary executor was, however, cancelled early in 1892 on the announcement of my engagement to marry the leading Fabian Socialist.

We met yesterday at The Athenæum by appointment. He was affectionate and cordial to me personally. "I cannot congratulate you—that would be insincere." Then there was a short pause. "My family have taken it benevolently," I remarked, and then observed that there was after all nothing against Mr. Webb, he had proved himself to be a man of capacity and determination. "You see that he has succeeded in marrying me, Mr. Spencer—that shows he has a will." "Undoubtedly," groaned the philosopher, "that is exactly what I fear—you both have Wills, and they *must* clash." "He has a sweet temper and has been an excellent brother and son," I urged quietly, and gave

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a vivid description of his good domestic qualities. But presently the real source of anxiety was disclosed.

"I feel I am in a fix about the personal matter to which you alluded in your letter—the literary executorship. It would not do for my reputation that I should be openly connected with an avowed and prominent Socialist—that is impossible. Inferences would be drawn however much I protested that the relationship was purely personal with you."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Spencer," I answered sympathetically. "I fully realised that I should have to give up the literary executorship."

"But what can I do," he said plaintively. "Grant Allen, whom I thought of before, has become a Fabian. There is no one who possesses at once the literary gift, the personal intimacy with my past life and the right opinions, to undertake the task."

"What about Howard Collins?" I said, thinking of the grim irony of the poor old man thrown back on the mechanically minded Timothy. "He is sound; would he not do?"

"He would be the proper person—but then he has no gift like you have of making his subject interesting."

"But I should be delighted to help him in any way you like to propose, either acknowledged or not."

The Philosopher lay back in his chair with a sigh of relief. "That arrangement would be admirable—that is exactly what I should desire—the Life would appear under his name and you would add reminiscences and arrange the material. That would quite satisfy me," he repeated with a very visible access of cheerfulness.

"Well, Mr. Spencer, you can rely on my doing my utmost. Mr. Collins and I are excellent friends; we should work together admirably."

And so ended the interview; he satisfied about his reputation and I at ease with the dictates of filial piety. [MS. diary, February 1892.]

Our friendship was, however, in no way marred by the mishap of my marriage to a Socialist.

Second visit this year to the poor old man at Brighton. "If I believed in Induction I should be forced to believe that I was

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being pursued by demons," he laments; "and who knows?" he adds in strangely humble tone, "the veil may be lifted: it may be so." And all this because one or two persons with whom he has been casually connected have misbehaved themselves with women, and thus imperilled his reputation! [MS. diary, February 16, 1899.]

And here are the final entries, prior to and immediately following his death :

A pathetic three days at Brighton just before we left London. A note from Herbert Spencer's secretary one morning, saying that the old man was very ill, made me take the train to Brighton—I did not like the thought that he should be nearing death without an old friend by his side. I found the devoted secretary and kindly girl housekeeper much upset; the doctor said he would not last long, and he was so self-willed about his treatment that it was almost impossible to keep him fairly comfortable. They could not tell whether or no he would like to see me. However, when the secretary told him I was there, he asked for me. The poor old man looked as if he were leaving this world; and what pained me was his look of weary discomfort and depression. I kissed him on the forehead and took his hand in mine. He seemed so glad of this mark of affection: "It is good-bye, dear old, or is it young friend," he said with a slight flicker of a smile; "which word is the most appropriate?" And then he seemed anxious to talk. "If pessimism means that you would rather not have lived, then I am a pessimist," he said in tones of depression. "Life will be happier and nobler for those who come after you, Mr. Spencer, because of your work." "It is good of you to say so," he answered in a grateful tone. "Yes, humanity will develop—development is what we must look for," his voice becoming more earnest. "Come and see me before you go—that is enough at present."

My visit had excited him; and he dictated to his secretary an almost passionate little note (which I unfortunately lost) imploring me to come and be by his side when I heard that there was no hope of recovery. The little outburst of human affection had carried him out of his querulous reserve. Thinking that he could only last a few days, I came back the next day and

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established myself at an hotel near by. I saw him once or twice again, and both times he talked about the future of society. Poor old man! Co-partnership and piecework seemed an adequate solution of all problems—inaugurating industrial peace and bringing about a decay of militarism! As he grew stronger, his desire to live, which had given way in his extreme weakness, returned; and again he became chary of seeing any one who excited him. Now he seems to be gaining strength, and it looks as if he might live for many a day. If he would only give up his self-preserving policy and be content to make the most of every hour without considering the cost, he might yet have a happy end before him. [MS. diary, June 1903.]

Melancholy letter from H. S. Ran down to see him. Again repeated that he and we agreed in essentials, differed only in form. Was extremely sensitive as to his reputation and influence, felt that he had dropped out and was no longer of much consideration. "What you have thought and taught has become part of our mental atmosphere, Mr. Spencer," I said soothingly. "And like the atmosphere we are not aware of it. When you cease to be our atmosphere, then we shall again become aware of you as a personality." "That is a pleasant way of putting it," and he smiled. I tried to suggest that he should give up the struggle against ill fate and accept the rest of his existence. "Why should I be resigned?" he retorted almost angrily. "I have nothing to hope for in return for resignation. I look forward merely to extinction—that is a mere negative. No," he added with intense depression, "I have simply to vegetate between this and death, to suffer as little as I need, and, for that reason, I must not talk to you any more: it prevents me sleeping and upsets my digestion. Good-bye—come and see me again."

It is tragic to look at the whole of man's life as a bargain in which man gets perpetually the worst of it. But the notion of contract—a *quid pro quo*—is so ingrained in the poor old man that even illness and death seem a nasty fraud perpetrated by nature. [MS. diary, July 3, 1903.]

My old friend passed away peacefully this morning [I write afterwards]. Since I have been back in London this autumn I have been down to Brighton most weeks—last week I was

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there on Monday, Friday and Saturday, trying to soften these days of physical discomfort and mental depression by affectionate sympathy. "My oldest and dearest friend," he has called me these last visits. "Let us break bread together," he said on Monday, and insisted on a plate of grapes being set on the bed and both of us eating them. "You and I have had the same ends," he repeated again; "it is only in methods we have differed." On Saturday he was quite conscious and bade me an affectionate farewell—but he clearly wanted to be let alone to die and not troubled with further mental effort. Certainly these last months while he has been looking for death immediately—even longing for it—he has been benigner and less inclined to be querulous about his own miseries. But what with his dogmatic perversity in persisting in pernicious ways of living, his fretfulness towards and suspicion of his household, his pessimism about the world—it has been a sad ending. Indeed the last twenty years have been sad—poisoned by morphia and self-absorption, and contorted by that strangely crude vision of all human life as a series of hard bargains. . . . Still if we strip Herbert Spencer's life of its irritation and superficial egotism—brought about, I believe, by poisonous food and drugs—and of its narrow philosophy of conduct, there remains the single-hearted persistent seeker after truth—the absolute faith that a measure of truth was attainable and would, if sought for earnestly, bring about consolation and reformation to mankind—the implicit assumption that he must live for the future of the human race, not for his own comfort, pleasure or success. If he had only not dogmatically denied that which he could not perceive or understand, if he had, with sincerity, admitted his own deficiencies of knowledge and perception—perhaps even of reasoning power—if he had had a ray of true humility—what a great and inspiring personality he might have been. As it was he was a light to others in the *common places* of existence, but one that failed in the greater crises of life, and was quenched by sorrow or by temptation. Did the Light that was in him survive even for himself? To me he seemed in these last years to be stumbling in total darkness, hurting himself and then crying aloud in his lonely distress, clinging to his dogmas but without confident faith—with an almost despairing and defiant pride of



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intellect. Again, I assert that all these strange shortcomings and defects were like an ugly and distorted setting to a small but brilliant stone. This setting may drop from him at death and the everlasting brilliant of truth-seeking remain. He will be among the elect.

As I sat this morning arranging the papers for our next chapter my thoughts were perpetually drifting to the dear old man, trying to recall the details of my long debt of gratitude for his friendship. As a little child he was perhaps the only person who persistently cared for me—or rather who singled me out as one who was worthy of being trained and looked after. Intellectually he had no dominant influence until after the age of twenty, when I first began to study his works systematically. But though I had not until then grasped his philosophy, merely talking to him and listening to his long and pleasant discussions with Mother stimulated both my curiosity as to the facts and my desire to discover the principles or laws underlying these facts. He taught me to look on all social institutions exactly as if they were plants or animals—things that could be observed, classified and explained, and the action of which could to some extent be foretold if one knew enough about them.

It was after Mother's death—in the first years of mental vigour—that I read the *First Principles* and followed his generalisations through Biology, Psychology and Sociology. This generalisation illuminated my mind; the importance of functional adaptation was, for instance, at the basis of a good deal of the faith in collective regulation that I afterwards developed. Once engaged in the application of the scientific method to the facts of social organisation, in my observations of East End life, of co-operation, of Factory Acts, of Trade Unionism, I shook myself completely free from *laissez-faire* bias—in fact I suffered from a somewhat violent reaction from it. And in later years even the attitude towards religion and towards supernaturalism which I had accepted from him as the last word of enlightenment, has become replaced by another attitude—no less agnostic but with an inclination to doubt materialism more than I doubt spiritualism—to listen for voices in the great Unknown, to open my consciousness to the non-material world—to prayer. If I had to live my life over again, according to my present

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attitude I should, I think, remain a conforming member of the National Church. My case, I think, is typical of the rise and fall of Herbert Spencer's influence over the men and women of my own generation.

It is more difficult to unravel the effect of his *example* on the conduct of life. The amazing loyalty to a disinterested aim, the patience, endurance, the noble faith manifested in his daily life, sustained me through those dark years of discouragement, before success made continuous effort easy, and loving comradeship made it delightful. Contrariwise, the fitfulness, suspicion, petty irritations and antagonisms which have disfigured the later years have, perhaps unjustly (?), increased my distaste for all varieties of utilitarian ethics, all attempts to apply the scientific method to the *Purpose* as distinguished from the *Processes* of existence. His failure to attain to the higher levels of conduct and feeling has sealed my conviction in the bankruptcy of science when it attempts to realise the cause or the aim of human existence. [MS. diary, December 8 and 9, 1903.]

In my attempt to portray the father and the mother, the household saint and the philosopher on the hearth, I have drifted down the stream of time, far away from the circumstances surrounding childhood and youth. To these circumstances I now recur.

The leased house on the slope of the Cotswold Hills, nine miles from my father's main business—the timber yards and waggon works in the city of Gloucester—where I was born and mostly bred, was in all its domestic arrangements typical of the mid-Victorian capitalist. The building, a plain and formless structure, more like an institution than a home (it is now a county hospital), was sharply divided into front and back premises. The front region, with a south-western aspect, overlooked flower gardens and the beautiful vale of the Severn: the stairs and landings were heavily carpeted; the bedrooms and sitting-rooms were plainly but substantially furnished in mahogany and leather,

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the "best" drawing-room and my mother's boudoir more ornately blossoming into reminiscences of the 1851 Exhibition. In this front portion of the house resided my father and mother and any honoured guests; the library and study were frequented by my elder sisters, and in the large and sunny dining-room all the family assembled for the mid-day meal. The back premises, with a predominantly northern aspect, overlooked laurel shrubberies, the servants' yard, the stables and extensive kitchen gardens. Bare stone steps led to long corridors of bedrooms one apartment exactly like the other in shape and necessary furniture; stone-flagged passages connected the housekeeper's room of the upper servants with the larger servants' hall for the underlings, and a stone-paved yard separated the kitchen, scullery and larder from the laundries. In this back region of the house were the day and night nurseries, the large bare schoolroom overlooking the servants' yard and stables, the governesses' bedrooms, the one bathroom of the establishment, and, be it added, my father's billiard- and smoking-room. But Standish House and its surroundings had not the significance usually attached to a family home, seeing that, individually or collectively, the family was always on the move. For the restless spirit of big enterprise dominated our home life. In the early spring of most years we moved to a furnished house for the London season; from thence to Rusland Hall in Westmorland, a residence necessitated by timber yards at Barrow; whilst a small property encircling a ramshackle old manor house overhanging the Wye valley served as a playground for the younger members of the family, when the elders were entertaining "house parties" in Gloucestershire. But the most upsetting factor were my father's frequent business tours, usually accompanied by two of his daughters, in Canada,

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the United States or Holland, as railway president and director of industrial companies.

The same note of perpetual change characterised our social relationships. We had no intercourse either in the country or in London with our nearest neighbours; nor did we belong to any organised profession or church; and my father, who had been brought up a Radical and had become a Conservative, took little part in local politics beyond subscribing handsomely to his party's funds. It is true that there was, somewhere in the background of our Gloucestershire life, a social entity called "county society," consisting for the most part of a monotonous level of fox-hunting squires and the better-off incumbents; this plain of dull conventionality being broken here and there by the social peaks of peer or baronet, by the outstanding opulence of a retired manufacturer or trader, or, and this was the most invigorating variety, by the wider culture and more heterodox opinions of the Bishop and the Dean of Gloucester of the period. But the attachments of the family of the timber merchant of Gloucester to county society had always been loose and undefined; and as I grew up and the family became more nomadic, these more stationary ties fell to the ground. The world of human intercourse in which I was brought up was in fact an endless series of human beings, unrelated one to the other, and only casually connected with the family group—a miscellaneous crowd who came into and went out of our lives, rapidly and unexpectedly. Servants came and went; governesses and tutors came and went; business men of all sorts and degrees, from American railway presidents to Scandinavian timber growers, from British Imperial company promoters to managers and technicians of local works, came and went; perpetually changing circles of "London Society" acquaintances came

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and went; intellectuals of all schools of thought, religious, scientific and literary, came and went; my elder sisters' suitors, a series extensive and peculiar, came and went, leaving it is true, in the course of my girlhood, a permanent residue of seven brothers-in-law, who brought with them yet other business, professional and political affiliations, extending and diversifying the perpetually shifting panorama of human nature in society which opened to my view. Our social relations had no roots in neighbourhood, in vocation, in creed, or for that matter in race; they likened a series of moving pictures—surface impressions without depth—restlessly stimulating in their glittering variety. How expressive of the circumstance of modern profit-making machine enterprises is now its culminating attempt to entertain the world—the ubiquitous cinema!

There was, however, one section of humanity wholly unrepresented in these moving pictures, the world of labour. With the word labour I was, of course, familiar. Coupled mysteriously with its mate capital, this abstract term was always turning up in my father's conversation, and it occurred and reoccurred in the technical journals and reports of companies which lay on the library table. "Water plentiful and labour docile," "The wages of labour are falling to their natural level," "To raise artificially the wage of labour is like forcing water up hill: when the pressure is removed the wage, like the water, falls down hill," were phrases which puzzled me: the allusion to water and its ways giving a queer physico-mechanical twist to my conception of the labouring classes of the current history books. Indeed, I never visualised labour as separate men and women of different sorts and kinds. Right down to the time when I became interested in social science and began to train as a social investigator, labour was an abstraction, which seemed

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to denote an arithmetically calculable mass of human beings each individual a repetition of the other, very much in the same way that the capital of my father's companies consisted, I imagined, of gold sovereigns identical with all other gold sovereigns in form, weight and colour, and also in value, except "when the capital is watered" explained my father. Again this mysterious allusion to water! Was it because water was the most monotonous and most easily manipulated of the elements? I enquired.

This ignorance about the world of labour, did it imply class consciousness, the feeling of belonging to a superior caste? A frank answer seems worth giving. There was no consciousness of superior riches: on the contrary, owing to my mother's utilitarian expenditure (a discriminating penuriousness which I think was traditional in families rising to industrial power during the Napoleonic wars) the Potter girls were brought up to "feel poor." "You girls," grumbled a brother-in-law, as he glanced from a not too luxurious breakfast table at the unexpectedly large credit in his bank-book, "have neither the habit nor the desire for comfortable expenditure." The consciousness that was present, I speak for my own analytic mind, was the consciousness of superior power. As life unfolded itself I became aware that I belonged to a class of persons who habitually gave orders, but who seldom, if ever, executed the orders of other people. My mother sat in her boudoir and gave orders—orders that brooked neither delay nor evasion. My father, by temperament the least autocratic and most accommodating of men, spent his whole life giving orders. He ordered his stockbroker to buy and sell shares, his solicitor to prepare contracts and undertake legal proceedings. In the running of the timber yards, his intervention took the form of final decisions with regard to

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the new developments in buying and selling, the new agreements with railway companies as to rates and transport facilities. When those maps of continents were unrolled before him I listened with fascinated interest to eager discussions, whether a line of railway should run through this section or that; at what exact point the station or junction should be placed; what land should be purchased for the contingent town; whether this patch or that, of forest, coalfield or mineral ore, should be opened up or left for future generations to exploit. And these manifold decisions seemed to me to be made without reference to any superior authority, without consideration of the desires or needs of the multitude of lives which would, in fact, be governed by them; without, in short, any other consideration than that of the profit of the promoters. As for the shareholders' control (with what bewildered curiosity I watched the preparation for these meetings !), I knew it was a myth as far as human beings were concerned; it was patently the shares that were counted and not the holders; and share certificates, like all other forms of capital, could be easily manipulated. And when, one after the other, my sisters' husbands joined the family group, they also were giving orders: the country gentleman on his estate and at sessions; the manufacturer in his mill; the shipowner to his fleet of ships on the high seas; the city financier in the money market floating or refusing to float foreign government loans; the Member of Parliament as Financial Secretary of the Treasurer; the surgeon and the barrister well on their way to leadership in their respective professions. It remains to be added, though this is forestalling my tale, that on the death of my mother I found myself giving orders and never executing them. Reared in this atmosphere of giving orders it was not altogether surprising that I

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apparently acquired the marks of the caste. When, in search of facts, I found myself working as a trouser hand in a low-grade Jewish shop, I overheard the wife of the sub-contractor, as she examined my bungled buttonholes, remark to her husband, "She's no good at the sewing: if I keep her I will put her to look after the outworkers—she's got the voice and manner to deal with that bloody lot." Alas! to be recognised—not as a scholar, not even as a "r-e-e-l-lid-ee" unaccustomed to earn her livelihood—but as a person particularly fitted by nature or nurture "to give work out" and to "take work in" in such a manner and in such a voice as to make the biggest profit for (I say it as a justifiable retort) that bloody sweater!

The masculine world of big enterprise, with its passion for adventure and assumption of power, had its complement for its womenkind in the annual "London season" and all that it implied. I do not know whether this peculiar and I imagine ephemeral type of social intercourse still survives; or whether, in so far as the daughters of business and professional men are concerned, it gradually faded away with the opening of university education and professional careers to women in the twentieth century. But in the 'seventies and 'eighties the London season, together with its derivative country-house visiting, was regarded by wealthy parents as the equivalent, for their daughters, of the university education and professional training afforded for their sons, the adequate reason being that marriage to a man of their own or a higher social grade was the only recognised vocation for women not compelled to earn their own livelihood. It was this society life which absorbed nearly half the time and more than half the vital energy of the daughters of the upper and upper middle class; it fixed their standards of personal expenditure; it formed their manners and,



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either by attraction or repulsion it determined their social ideals. When I turned to social investigation as my craft in life, it was just my experience of London Society that started me with a personal bias effectually discounting, even if it did not wholly supersede, my father's faith in the social value of a leisured class.

Can I define, as a good sociologist should, the social entity I am about to criticise? For this purpose I do not know whether it is an advantage or disadvantage that I observed it, not from a position of privilege, but as one of the common herd of well-to-do folk who belonged or thought they belonged to London Society. From my particular point of observation London Society appeared as a shifting mass of miscellaneous and uncertain membership; it was essentially a body that could be defined, not by its circumference, which could not be traced, but by its centre or centres; centres of social circles representing or epitomising certain dominant forces within the British governing class. There was the Court, representing national tradition and custom; there was the Cabinet and ex-Cabinet, representing political power; there was a mysterious group of millionaire financiers representing money; there was the racing set—or was it the Jockey Club? I am not versed in these matters—representing sport. All persons who habitually entertained and who were entertained by the members of any one of these key groups could claim to belong to London Society. These four inner circles crossed and recrossed each other owing to an element of common membership; this, in the 'seventies and 'eighties, happening to consist of striking personalities: such, for instance, as Edward, Prince of Wales, and the magnetically attractive Grand Seigneur who, as the tiresome tag tells, won the Derby, married a Rothschild and was destined to

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become Prime Minister of the British Empire at a time when there was still a British Empire. Surrounding and solidifying these four intersecting social circles was a curiously tough substance—the British aristocracy—an aristocracy, as a foreign diplomatist once remarked to me, “the most talented, the most energetic and the most vulgar in the world;” characteristics which he attributed to a perpetual process of casting out and renewal, younger sons and daughters falling out of social rank to sink or swim among their fellow-commoners, whilst the new rich of the British Empire and the United States were assimilated by marriage, or by the sale of honours to persons of great riches but with mean minds and mediocre manners, in order to replenish the electoral fund, of the “ins” and “outs.” But however diluted or enlarged the old landed aristocracy might be by marriage or the manufactured-for-money article, it did not surround or isolate the Court; it was already a minor element in the Cabinet; and though it might still claim precedence on the race-course and the hunting field, it was barely represented in the ever-changing group of international financiers who ruled the money market. The bulk of the shifting mass of wealthy persons who were conscious of belonging to London Society, who practised its rites and followed its fashions, were, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, professional profit-makers: the old-established families of bankers and brewers, often of Quaker descent, coming easily in social precedence; then one or two great publishers and, at a distance, shipowners, the chairmen of railway and some other great corporations, the largest of the merchant bankers—but as yet no retailers. Scattered in this pudding-stone of men of rank and men of property were jewels of intellect and character; cultivated diplomatists from all the countries of the world, great

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lawyers, editors of powerful newspapers, scholarly ecclesiastics of the Anglican and Roman Catholic communions; the more "stylish" of the permanent heads of Government departments, and here and there a star personage from the world of science, literature or art, who happened to combine delight in luxurious living and the company of great personages with social gifts and a fairly respectable character. To this strangely heterogeneous crowd were added from time to time topical "hons," belonging to all races and all vocations, with strictly temporary tickets of admission for the season of their ephemeral notoriety.

Now the first and foremost characteristic of the London season and country-house life, a characteristic which distinguished it from the recreation and social intercourse of the rest of the community, was the fact that some of the men and practically all the women made the pursuit of pleasure their main occupation in life. I say advisedly *some* of the men, because the proportion of functionless males, I mean in the economic sense, varied according to whether the particular social circle frequented was dominated by the Cabinet and ex-Cabinet or by the racing and sporting set. Among my own acquaintances (I except mere partners at London and country-house dances, for dancing men in my time were mostly fools) there were very few men who were not active brain-workers in politics, administration, law, science or literature. In the racing set, which I knew only by repute, I gathered that the professional brain-workers, whether speculators or artists, book-makers, trainers or jockeys and the like, rarely belonged to "society"; in their social and economic subordination these professional workers of the world of sport did not differ materially from other providers of entertainment—game-keepers, gardeners, cooks and tradesmen. But

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about the women there was no such distinction. In the brilliant memoirs of Mrs. Asquith—a document, owing to its frankness, of great value to the sociologist—this fact is brought out with startling emphasis and attractive vividness. Riding, dancing, flirting and dressing up—in short, entertaining and being entertained—all occupations which imply the consumption and not the production of commodities and services, were the very substance of her life before marriage and a large and important part of it after marriage. And my own experience as an unmarried woman was similar. How well I recollect those first days of my early London seasons: the pleasurable but somewhat feverish anticipation of endless distraction, a dissipation of mental and physical energy which filled up all the hours of the day and lasted far into the night; the ritual to be observed; the presentation at Court, the riding in the Row, the calls, the lunches and dinners, the dances and crushes, Hurlingham and Ascot, not to mention amateur theatricals and other sham philanthropic excrescences. There was of course a purpose in all this apparently futile activity, the business of getting married; a business carried on by parents and other promoters, sometimes with genteel surreptitiousness, sometimes with cynical effrontery. Meanwhile, as one form of entertainment was piled on another, the pace became fast and furious; a mania for reckless talking, for the experimental display of one's own personality, ousted all else from consciousness. Incidentally I discovered that personal vanity was an "occupational disease" of London Society; and that any one who suffered as I did from constitutional excitability in this direction, the symptoms being not only painful ups and downs of inflation and depression but also little lies and careless cruelties, should avoid it as the very devil. By the end of

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the season, indigestion and insomnia had undermined physical health; a distressing mental nausea, taking the form of cynicism about one's own and other people's character, had destroyed all faith in and capacity for steady work. And when these years of irresponsible girlhood were over, and I found myself my father's housekeeper and hostess, I realised that the pursuit of pleasure was not only an undertaking, but also an elaborate, and to me a tiresome undertaking, entailing extensive plant, a large number of employees and innumerable decisions on insignificant matters. There was the London house to be selected and occupied; there was the stable of horses and carriages to be transported; there was the elaborate stock of prescribed garments to be bought; there was all the commissariat and paraphernalia for dinners, dances, picnics and week-end parties to be provided. Among the wealthier of one's relatives and acquaintances there were the deer forests and the shooting-boxes, all entailing more machinery, the organisation of which frequently devolved on the women of the household.

For good or evil, according to the social ideals of the student, this remarkable amalgam, London Society and country-house life, differed significantly from other social aristocracies. There were no fixed caste barriers; there seemed to be, in fact, no recognised types of exclusiveness based on birth or breeding, on personal riches or on personal charm; there was no fastidiousness about manners or morals or intellectual gifts. Like the British Empire, London Society had made itself what it was in a fit of absent-mindedness. To foreign observers it appeared all-embracing in its easy-going tolerance and superficial good nature. "One never knows whom one is going to sit next to at a London dinner party," ruefully remarked the

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afore-mentioned diplomatist. But deep down in the unconscious herd instinct of the British governing class there *was* a test of fitness for membership of this most gigantic of all social clubs, but a test which was seldom recognised by those who applied it, still less by those to whom it was applied, *the possession of some form of power over other people*. The most obvious form of power, and the most easily measurable, was the power of wealth. Hence any family of outstanding riches, if its members were not actually mentally deficient or legally disreputable, could hope to rise to the top, marry its daughters to Cabinet Ministers and noblemen, and even become in time itself ennobled. I once asked a multi-millionaire of foreign extraction, with a domestic circle not distinguished in intellect or character, why he had settled in England rather than in Paris, Berlin or Vienna. "Because in England there is complete social equality," was his rapid retort: an answer that was explained, perhaps verified, by a subsequent announcement that King Edward and his *entourage* had honoured by his presence the millionaire's palatial country residence. Personal wealth was, however, only one of the many different types of power accepted as a passport to good society; a great industrial administrator, not himself endowed with much capital, so long as he could provide remunerative posts for younger sons or free passes on trans-continental railways, could, if he chose, associate on terms of flattering personal intimacy with those members of the British aristocracy, and there were many of them, who desired these favours. And it must be admitted that there was no narrow view as to the type of power to be honoured with the personal intercourse of great personages. Thirty years before the Labour Party became His Majesty's Government there was a distinct desire, on the part of a

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select politico-social set, to welcome the leaders of the newly enfranchised Trade Union democracy. And if the tiny group of Labour leaders had not been singularly refined and retiring, and, be it added, puritanical men, they also would have been caught up in the meshes of society, to be immediately dropped when they ceased to represent their thousands of members. The same worship of power was shown in the supersession of one type of person by another. For instance, in the 'seventies the editors of great newspapers and other periodicals, men of broad culture and great experience of public affairs, were honoured guests; but even in my time the editors were beginning to be overshadowed by the millionaire newspaper proprietors, men who were not distinguished by wit, wisdom, technical skill or professional good manners. The more recent and more notorious instance of this driving out of the finer by the baser type was the social subserviency of quite well-bred and cultivated men and women to the South African millionaires, some of whom had neither manners nor morals; and all of whom were immeasurably inferior in charm and refinement, if not to the Rothschilds, most assuredly to the Barings and Glyns, the Lubbocks, Hoares and Buxtons, who had represented money power in the London Society of the 'seventies and 'eighties. What was even more demoralising than this degraded and coarsening scale of values, because it bred a poisonous cynicism about human relations, was the making and breaking of personal friendships according to temporary and accidental circumstances in no way connected with personal merit: gracious appreciation and insistent intimacy being succeeded, when failure according to worldly standards occurred, by harsh criticism and cold avoidance. More especially was this the case in the relations between women. The rumour of

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an approaching marriage to a great political personage would be followed by a stream of invitations; if the rumour proved unfounded the shower stopped with almost ridiculous promptitude. A similar drying up of the effusive and appreciative friendship of leaders of Society was experienced by wives and daughters stripped by death of celebrated husbands and fathers. This subconscious pursuit of power was manifested in a more equivocal form. The conventional requirements with regard to personal morality, sexual or financial, were graded with almost meticulous exactitude to the degree of social, political or industrial power exercised by the person concerned. A duchess, especially if she came from a princely family, might exchange her insignificant duke for a powerful marquis as a habitual companion without causing the slightest dent in her social acceptability. But if Mrs. Smith indulged in similar domestic waywardness the penalty was complete social ostracism. The same graded requirements were applied to financial misdemeanour. Past iniquities of a multi-millionaire, whose millions were secure, were discreetly forgotten; an honourable bankruptcy brought about by lack of knowledge or sheer ill luck led to ignoring not the sin but the sinner. There seemed in fact to be a sort of invisible stock exchange in constant communication with the leading hostesses in London and in the country; the stock being social reputations and the reason for appreciation or depreciation being worldly success or failure however obtained. Some stocks were gilt-edged, royal personages or persons who were at once outstandingly wealthy and genuinely aristocratic, their value could neither be "bulled" nor "beared" by current rumours; but the social value of the ruck of individuals who trooped to the political receptions or forgathered in



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the houses of the less well-known hostesses, went up and down as rapidly and unexpectedly as do the shares of the less well-known and more hazardous "industrials" in the money market.<sup>1</sup> It was this continuous uncertainty as to social status that led to all the ugly methods of entertaining practised by the crowd who wanted "to get into society"; the variety or "menagerie" element in many entertainments so often caricatured by *Punch*; the competition in conspicuous expenditure on clothes, food, wine and flowers; above all, the practice of inviting persons with whom you had nothing in common because they would attract desired guests to your house. Nor did the manners of the most gifted and fastidious members of the governing groups remain unaffected by this competitive element in London Society, the push inwards by the crowd being inevitably followed, in order to rid themselves of unwelcome attentions, by a push outwards by the members of the inner circles. Now, it is the push that is vulgar, not its direction;

<sup>1</sup> It appears from *Lord Randolph Churchill*, by Winston Churchill, 1906, vol. i. p. 74, that even the son of a duke might suffer this swift change from caressing friendliness to cold neglect, if he had incurred the enmity of a sufficiently powerful person, say, for instance, Edward, Prince of Wales. "But in the year 1876," recounts the son and biographer of Lord Randolph, "an event happened which altered, darkened and strengthened his whole life and character. Engaging in his brother's quarrels with force and reckless partisanship, Lord Randolph incurred the deep displeasure of a great personage. The fashionable world no longer smiled. Powerful enemies were anxious to humiliate him. His own sensitiveness and pride magnified every coldness into an affront. London became odious to him. The breach was not repaired for more than eight years, and in the interval a nature originally genial and gay contracted a stern and bitter quality, a harsh contempt for what is called 'Society,' and an abiding antagonism to rank and authority." How oddly old-fashioned this scale of values reads in these democratic days!

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and the fact that the push outwards was, by well-bred persons, usually manifested, not in words or acts, but by subtle forms of insolent expression, "that distant look characteristic of people who do not wish to be agreeable, and who from suddenly receding depths of their eyes seem to have caught sight of you at the far end of an interminably straight road," to quote the inimitable Marcel Proust, did not make it less a breach of good-fellowship, and therefore of good manners, than the swear-words of Billingsgate. And yet who could blame socially distinguished men and women for developing in the course of a long life, spent in the midst of a mob of competing hostesses, this self-protective colouring of a detached but withering insolence of gesture and expression assumed at will towards this or that person whom they were compelled to recognise as social acquaintances, but whose company had always been or had become distasteful to them? There may be saints who can live untainted in such an environment, exactly as we know that there are men and women who retain their moral refinement in a one-room tenement, inhabited by persons of both sexes and all ages. But the true-born saint, whether rich or poor, is an uncommon variety of the human species.

Such was the attitude of man towards man in the social environment in which I was reared. The dominant impulse was neither the greed of riches nor the enjoyment of luxurious living, though both these motives were present, but the desire for power. The attitude of man towards the universe—that is to say, the metaphysical atmosphere—is more difficult to describe, partly, I deem, because the period was one of rapid transition from one metaphysic to another. For, looking back, it now seems to me that it was exactly in those last decades of the nineteenth century

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that we find the watershed between the metaphysic of the Christian Church, which had hitherto dominated British civilisation, and the agnosticism, deeply coloured by scientific materialism, which was destined, during the first decades of the twentieth century, to submerge all religion based on tradition and revelation. Judging by my own experience among the organisers of big enterprise, with their "business morality" and their international affiliations, the Christian tradition, already in the 'seventies and 'eighties, had grown thin and brittle, more easily broken than repaired. When staying in the country my parents were, it is true, regular churchgoers and communicants; and my father always enjoyed reading the lessons in the parish churches frequented by the household in Gloucestershire, Westmorland and Monmouthshire. Parenthetically I may remark that it was symptomatic of the general decline of orthodoxy that one who had been brought up as a Unitarian and had never been admitted to the Anglican Church by the rite of confirmation, should have been, not only accepted as a communicant by Anglican clergymen who knew the facts, but also habitually invited, as the wealthy layman of the congregation, to take an active part in the service. Owing to personal religion, filial respect, or the joy of walking to and fro with the beloved father, one or two of the Potter girls would find themselves in the family pew each Sabbath day. But here conformity ended. No compulsion, even no pressure, was put on us to attend religious services. During the London season my father, accompanied by a bevy of daughters, would start out on a Sunday morning to discover the most exciting speaker on religious or metaphysical issues; and we would listen with equal zest to Monsignor Capel or Cannon Liddon, Spurgeon or Voysey, James Martineau or

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Frederic Harrison; discussing on the walk back across the London Parks the religious rhetoric or dialectical subtleties of preacher or lecturer. Except for this eclectic enjoyment of varieties of metaphysical experience, the atmosphere of the home was peculiarly free-thinking. There was no censorship whether of talk in the family, or of the stream of new books and current periodicals, or of the opinions of the crowd of heterogeneous guests. Any question which turned up in classical or modern literature, in law reports or technical journals, from the origin of species to the latest diplomatic despatch, from sexual perversion to the rates of exchange, would be freely and frankly discussed within the family circle. Perhaps the only expenditure unregulated and unrestricted by my mother, she herself being the leading spendthrift, was the purchase or subscription for books, periodicals and newspapers. And whether we girls took down from the well-filled library shelves the *Confessions of St. Augustine* or those of Jean Jacques Rousseau, whether the parcel from Hatchett's contained the latest novels by Guy de Maupassant and Emile Zola or the learned tomes of Auguste Comte or Ernest Renan; whether we ordered from the London Library or from Mudie's a pile of books on Eastern religions, or a heterogeneous selection of what I will call "yellow" literature, was determined by our own choice or by the suggestion of any casual friend or acquaintance. When we complained to my father that a book we wanted to read was banned by the libraries: "Buy it, my dear," was his automatic answer. And if the whirl of society in which we lived undermined character by its amazing variety, it most assuredly disintegrated prejudices and destroyed dogma. My father had a weakness for ecclesiastics, and Dr. Ellicott, the then Bishop of Gloucester, was his favourite associate in the county;

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whilst Cardinal Manning was an honoured visitor in London. But Herbert Spencer, who was far and away the most intimate of the family friends, was always arguing with my mother on the origin of religion, deriding and denouncing ecclesiasticism and all its works; and I think it was he who brought into our circle of acquaintances Francis Galton and Sir Joseph Hooker, Huxley and Tyndall, whilst to Spencer's annual picnic came George Henry Lewes and occasionally George Eliot. Nor was this absence of "taboos" reserved exclusively for the intellectual plane. In the neighbourhood of our Gloucestershire home there resided one known in the county by the endearing title of "the wicked earl," whose stately mansion my Puritan mother persistently refused to enter. Yet in the first few weeks of "coming out" I accompanied my father on such a visit; listened to the cry of "*Messieurs et Mesdames, faites vos jeux*"; and found in my aforementioned "voice and manner," and in bookish talk, an effective safeguard and timely diversion when I guilelessly went out (in those days of conventional chaperonage) for a long walk alone with a married man of fashion.

We lived, indeed, in a perpetual state of ferment, receiving and questioning all contemporary hypotheses as to the duty and destiny of man in this world and the next. Into this all-questioning state of mind were thrust the two most characteristic of current assumptions: first, that physical science could solve all problems; and secondly, that every one, aided by a few elementary textbooks, could be his own philosopher and scientist—just as a previous generation had imagined that if only the law were codified into a clearly printed little handbook, every man could be his own lawyer. Living a life of leisure on this

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battlefield of mixed metaphysic and conflicting ethic, it is not surprising that the first fifteen years of my thinking life were spent, not in learning a craft, but in seeking a creed by the light of which I could live the life I had to lead.

## CHAPTER II

IN SEARCH OF A CREED [1862-1882 ; *ÆT.* 4-24]

THE youngest but one of the nine daughters, creeping up in the shadow of my baby brother's birth and death, I spent my childhood in a quite special way among domestic servants, to whom as a class I have an undying gratitude. I was neither ill-treated nor oppressed: I was merely ignored. For good or for evil I was left free to live my own little life within the large and loose framework of family circumstance.

The first scene I remember was finding myself naked and astonished outside the nursery door, with my clothes flung after me, by the highly trained and prim woman who had been engaged as my brother's nurse. What exactly happened to me on that particular morning I do not recollect. The French and English governesses who presided over the education of my sisters decided I was too young for the schoolroom. Eventually I took refuge in the laundry, a spacious and well-lighted room, sunny in the summer and deliciously warm in the winter, under the voluntary but devoted care of the head laundry-maid, a kind and clever girl, skilful worker and pious chapel-goer, who, now over eighty years of age, is still my friend. On Monday, the washing day, when my chum and her assistants were immersed in soapsuds and enveloped in steam, I was warned off the premises, but from Tuesday afternoon I was welcome to come and go. Here, curled up amid rough-dried table-cloths and bed-sheets, I dozed and

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day-dreamed; or, sitting on the ironing-board swinging my legs, I chattered to an audience of admiring maids about my intention, when I was grown up, of becoming a nun. Another favoured place was the hayloft, up a ladder from the harness room, to which by a benevolent coachman I was admitted, with a big tabby cat, my adored follower and purring playmate. Out of doors there were "secret" places in the shrubberies where I arranged and rearranged stones and sticks; grottos in the woods where I puddled leaky pools in trickling streams; all the time building castles in the air in which the picture of a neglected child enjoying her own melodramatically forgiving death-bed was succeeded by the more cheerful vision of courting lovers. How and when I learnt to read I do not remember. Long before I drifted into the schoolroom for spells of regular lessons, continuous reading, self-selected from the masses of books stacked in the library, study and schoolroom bookcases, or from the miscellaneous pamphlets, periodicals and newspapers scattered throughout the house, had become my main occupation; a wholesome alternative to castle-building but not conducive to robust health. Indeed, almost continuous illness, bouts of neuralgia, of indigestion, of inflammation of all sorts and kinds, from inflamed eyes to congested lungs, marred my happiness; and worse than physical pain was boredom, due to the incapacity of ill-health, the ever-recurring problem of getting rid of the time between the meals, and from getting up to going to bed; and, worst of all, the sleepless hours between going to bed and getting up. I have a vivid memory of stealing and secreting a small bottle of chloroform from the family medicine-chest as a vaguely imagined alternative to the pains of life and the ennui of living; and of my consternation when one day I found the stopper loose



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and the contents evaporated.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the procession of governesses, English, French and German, did not trouble me. For the most part I liked them and they liked me. But after a few weeks or months of experimenting in regular schoolroom hours, and disagreeable tussles with arithmetic or grammar, I always took to my bed, the family doctor prescribing "no lessons, more open-air exercise, if possible a complete change of scene." When the last of my elder sisters "came out," and my youngest sister had to be provided with a nursery governess, all pretence at formal education was abandoned.

But by this time I had invented a device of my own for self-culture—reading the books of my free choice, and in my private manuscript book extracting, abstracting and criticising what I had read. To these immature reviews of books were added from time to time, as the spirit moved me, confessions of personal shortcomings or reflections on my own or other people's affairs.

I imagine that the majority of lonely but mentally alert children get into the habit of scribbling their thoughts and feelings, either to rid themselves of painful emotion or in order to enjoy the unwonted pleasure of self-expression. When this habit is combined with native wit, original

<sup>1</sup> "My childhood was not on the whole a happy one," I wrote in 1884; "ill-health and starved affection, and the mental disorders which spring from these, ill-temper and resentment, marred it. Hours spent in secret places, under the shade of shrub and tree, in the leaf-filled hollows of the wood and in the crevices of the quarries, where I would sit and imagine love scenes and death-bed scenes and conjure up the intimacy and tenderness lacking in my life, made up the happy moments. But dreary times of brooding and resentfulness, sharp pains of mortified vanity and remorse for untruthfulness, constant physical discomfort and frequent pain absorbed the greater part of my existence; and its loneliness was absolute." [MS. diary, April 8, 1884.]

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observation and a quaint use of words, these scribblings may easily rise into literature. I have no such treasure to unlock. Unlike one or two of my sisters, I was born without artistic faculty, either for dancing or acting, for painting or music, for prose or poetry. The talents entrusted to my care were a tireless intellectual curiosity together with a double dose of will-power—all the more effective because it was largely subconscious, instinctively avoiding expression if insistence threatened to prevent fulfilment. It was the “overcoming by yielding” type of will, inherited from my father, which, when I was living amid the Jews in East London, I thought I recognised as a racial characteristic. But however useful intellectual curiosity and concentrated purpose may be to the scientific worker, they are not attractive gifts in a child or in a marriageable young woman, and they are therefore apt to be hidden. Nor do they lead to facile literary expression. Once I was started on the career of a social investigator, the manuscript books became a record of other people’s character and conversation; of their gestures and acts; in fact, of human behaviour; and, as such, these entries have an interest of their own. The diary becomes, in fact, one of the craftsman’s tools; in a later chapter I call it synthetic note-taking, in order to distinguish it from the analytic note-taking upon which historical work is based. Hence, in describing the technique of a social investigator—for instance, the use of the “interview” and “watching organisations at work”—I shall produce entries from my diary exactly as, in the Appendix, I give samples of analytic notes. But the scribblings of pre-craftsman years are records, not of objective facts but of subjective experiences; they represent the tracings on a sensitive brain, owing to family circumstances exposed to an unusually varied mental

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environment, of religious emotion and scientific thought, and of the business axioms and political theories characteristic of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Seeing that my purpose in this chapter is to describe the search after a creed by which to live, I do not hesitate to quote, as the most trustworthy evidence, some of my crude and illiterate jottings, written not for publication, but in order to clear the child's thought and express her feelings.

I am quite confident [I wrote on a half-sheet of notepaper when I was about ten years old] that the education of girls is very much neglected in the way of their private reading. Take, for instance, a girl of nine or ten years old, she is either forbidden to read any but child's books, or she is let loose on a good library; Sir Walter Scott's novels recommended to her as charming and interesting stories, "books that cannot do any possible harm," her adviser declares. But the object in reading is to gain knowledge. A novel now and then is a wise recreation to be offered to a crowing mind [*sic*, query "growing"], it cultivates the imagination, but taken as the continual nourishment, it destroys many a young mind. . . . The whole of their thought (for a child of nine or ten spends little or no thought on her lessons) is wasted on making up love scenes, or building castles in the air, where she is always the charming heroine without a fault. I have found it a serious stumbling-block to myself; whenever I get alone I always find myself building castles in the air of some kind; it is a habit that is so thoroughly immured in me that I cannot make a good resolution without making a castle in air about it.

This autumn unsatisfactory to me in many ways [I confess to myself in the autumn of 1872 at the more critical age of fourteen]. I have hardly learned anything in the way of lessons; honestly speaking, I have been extremely idle, especially during and after the company. But one thing I have learnt is, that I am exceedingly vain, to say the truth I am very disgusted with myself; whenever I am in the company of any gentleman, I cannot help wishing and doing all I possibly can to attract his attention and

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admiration; the whole time I am thinking how I look, which attitude becomes me, and contriving everything to make myself more liked and admired than my sisters. The question is, how can I conquer it, for it forwards every bad passion and suppresses every good one in my heart; the only thing I can think of, is to avoid gentlemen's society altogether. I feel I am not good enough to fight any temptation at present, I have not enough faith. Talking about faith, I don't know what to think about myself. I believe, and yet I am always acting contrary to my belief, when I am doing any silly action, when I am indulging my vanity, I hear a kind of voice saying within me, "It doesn't matter at present what you say and do, if there is a God, which I very much doubt, it will be time to think of that when you are married or an old maid," and what is worse still I am constantly acting on that idea. Meanwhile I feel my faith slipping from me, Christ seems to have been separated from me by [a] huge mass of worldliness and vanity. I can no more pray to Him with the same earnest faith as I used to do, my prayers seem mockeries. I pray against temptations, which I run into of my own accord, and then I complain secretly that my prayers are not answered. And intellectual difficulties of faith make it impossible to believe. I am very very wicked; I feel [as] if Christ can never listen to me again.

Vanity, all is vanity. I feel that I have transgressed deeply, that I have trifled with the Lord. I feel that if I continue thus I shall become a frivolous, silly, unbelieving woman, and yet every morning when I wake I have the same giddy confident feeling and every night I am miserable. The only thing is to give up any pleasure rather [than] go into society; it may be hard, in fact I know it will, but it must be done, else I shall lose all the remaining sparks of faith, and with those all the chances of my becoming a good and useful woman in this world, and a companion of our Lord in the next. December 23, 1872.

BEATRICE POTTER.

May God help me to keep my resolution.

How far this pious resolution to keep "out of society" led me in the following London season to concentrate on extracting tickets for the Ladies' Gallery of the House of

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Commons from my sisters' admirers I do not know.<sup>1</sup> But I recollect spending hours listening to debates—loathing Gladstone and losing my heart to Disraeli; on one occasion (I think it was after one of the big debates on the Ballot Bill) returning in a hansom cab in the small hours of the morning, alone with my latchkey, to our house in Princes Gardens, an occasion stamped on my memory by ravenous hunger. The autumn and winter of that year found me travelling with my father and my sister Kate in the United States of America. It is during this exciting episode that I start the habit of writing regularly in a MS. book, the first of an unbroken series of volumes extending now (1926) over half a century. The beauties and marvels of Niagara, the Yosemite Valley and the Californian geysers are duly recorded; but it is the human beings I meet and their attitude towards life which really interest me, and the only city I describe in any detail is Salt Lake City (Utah), where the state of mind of the plural wife rouses my curiosity. In spite of the proverbial dullness of journals of travel,

<sup>1</sup> We were brought up to be interested in politics and politicians, as is shown in the following description in a letter to my mother, when I was about eight, of the two Conservative candidates for Gloucester, I think at a by-election about 1866—a letter intended, I suspect, to impress my mother with my learning, the long words ornamented with capitals having obviously been copied out of some newspaper. "The two Conservative Candidates were here yesterday, one of them is very short and very finely dressed; he had his top coat trimmed with sealskin; he had also silver buckles on his boots and his hands were covered with rings, with a very stylish blue tie which covered his vast-coat; He also said he spoke italian and french perfectly. He played on the piano and sung; he seemed not to (k)now what mony words ment, for he asked papa what was the meaning of Demonstration, and Major Lees asked the meaning of Hustings and Nomination. Major Lees is very tall and very fat, with a great beard mustache and whiskers, with an eye glass which he satisfied his curiosity in staring at everybody."

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particularly from inexperienced and untrained minds, I give a few entries illustrating the general outlook on men and affairs of the girl of fifteen.

We left England on the 13th of September, two days after G.'s marriage.<sup>1</sup> I only enjoyed our passage pretty well, the people not being anything particular. The only nice people were, Mr. Bradford, Dr. Hall, Dr. Sharp, Mr. A. Pullman, Miss Holmes (I would say Mr. Knowles, but we hardly made his acquaintance on board). Mr. Bradford is an American artist—an Arctic traveller, and a great friend of Dr. Rae's.<sup>2</sup> He was one of those enthusiastic little men who have not a spark of sarcasm or cynicism in them, and see only the beauty and good in everybody. He was a general favourite on board, from his extreme kindness to and thoughtfulness about everybody. Kate made great friends with him, and they were to be seen constantly walking up and down the deck, arm in arm, evidently liking each other immensely, and sympathising in their views of people and things. I often envy Kate that way she has of drawing clever people out, and of making them talk to her as if they were talking to their own equal. Mr. Hall is the popular Presbyterian minister of New York. He was perhaps the man on board whom I saw most of, and took the greatest fancy to, so I shall describe him somewhat at length both physically and morally. He was a tall man, with a decided stoop, large features and forehead, not handsome but very impressive-looking. His face seemed to reflect his mind; when he was not talking, he had a perfectly calm, simple expression of calm, almost childish faith and love. But when he was preaching or talking seriously to one, he looked quite a different man; his face assumed a look of dignity and earnestness, and a strange smile came over his mouth, a smile which always reminded me of Dr. Arnold—I do not think he would be half such a charming man to live with as my favourite hero would have been, as he holds stern uncompromising opinions which seemed to me to be sometimes devoid of charity and which would have been almost offensive

<sup>1</sup> My fourth sister, Georgina (married to Daniel Meinertzhagen, September 1873).

<sup>2</sup> The Arctic traveller with whom I had been friends during the preceding London season of 1873.

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plays extend over centuries, being really the history of their different dynasties. . . .

*Tuesday, October 27th (San Francisco).*—The morning was spent in getting photographs of the Yosemite. At four o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Latham called to take Arthur and me down to his country place. I was so fearfully tired that I could not talk, and somehow or other I felt quite shy all the way down in the train. When we got there we were shown into the drawing-room where Mrs. Latham and Miss Washington (a friend of hers) were sitting. Mrs. Latham was an extremely pretty person, almost a beauty at first sight, but with uninteresting features when one came to pick them to pieces. She had a decidedly elegant figure, large handsome black eyes, a pretty complexion, and a good nose and mouth, but not one single feature showed any depth of intellect or character. From what she told me, I gathered that she had been kept very strictly "in" by her parents, until seventeen, and then suddenly presented to the world as a *belle*. She married Mr. Latham very young, a splendid match in way of money and position, and indeed a thoroughly nice and kind man, but old enough to be her father. I don't think it can be good for a young woman to be transported into the midst of luxury, and to be merely required to look pretty and graceful in her husband's drawing-room, without having any household duties or cares. Her friend, Miss Washington, was a different sort of girl. In appearance she was short and plump, with a pretty nose and nice soft intelligent eyes. She was an orphan (grandniece to the great Washington), and I fancy lived a great deal with Mrs. Latham. She was a nice bright jolly little person, who took interest in everybody and thing. Altogether she was more the hostess at Menton Park than Mrs. Latham herself. It was a splendid house, furnished with great taste, evidently without the least regard to expense. The garden was rather pretty, indeed very pretty for an American garden, but nothing to be compared to an English garden of any size. Mr. Latham went away early next morning, and we stayed till the four o'clock train up to Frisco. The whole of that evening I spent in packing up, as Kitty was quite unequal to it.

*Salt Lake, Saturday, November 1st.*—We arrived here about 12.30. We lost about one hour in deciding what we would do ;

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that is the worst of having a party, with no one really to take the lead, and arrange anything. At last Kate and I called out for lunch, thinking, at any rate, we should be better tempered after it. Then we decided all to go to the photographer's, as Richot had told Mr. Blackwall to call upon Arthur at 2.30. We had no introduction to this Mr. Blackwall, except that Richot knew him to be the son of the manager of the G.T. before Mr. Bridges was made Managing Director. However, he turned out to be a very nice young man, full of life and interest, and quite determined that we should enjoy ourselves. We drove first to his house, where there was a picture of Mr. Munger's of Emma mine. Then we went to the Tabernacle and Temple; the latter is not nearly finished. It is built in granite and will be, as far as one can see a very handsome building. The Tabernacle is, without exception, the most remarkable building I ever saw. It is entirely of wood, and the roof is covered with shingles (of wood). Inside, it is perfectly plain, without the least attempt at ornament. There is a raised platform at one end of the building, in the centre of which is Brigham's chair. Just below him sit the twelve apostles and the elders. Above him, sit his daughters and sons, forming the choir. His wives are scattered among the congregation, and have no particular seats of their own. The rest of the building is filled up with wooden seats, and there is a large gallery all round. The organ, said to be the second finest in America, was completely constructed at Utah. After seeing the Tabernacle, we drove up to the camp, where Mr. Blackwall took us to call on General and Mrs. Munro. They evidently lived on a small scale; Mrs. Munro coming in with a servant's print on, apologised, as it was house-cleaning day. The General looked an extremely nice man, but I had no opportunity of talking to him. The camp is on a hill above Salt Lake, so you have a magnificent view of the whole city. The city lies in the middle of a vast plain, completely surrounded (except on the side of the Lake) by two beautiful ranges of mountains, tipped all the year round with snow. As each house has its orchard and garden, it gives the city and its suburbs, viewed from above, the appearance of a wood, just spotted with white villas.

Then the large roof of the Tabernacle stands out in strong



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relief from the trees and houses, forming the ruling spirit of the picture. Mr. Blackwall came to dine, and took us to the theatre in the evening. The piece was *The Stranger*, with a farce called *The Blue-eyed Susan*. The acting was wretched, especially Mrs. Haller and the Stranger. But in spite of this I enjoyed myself immensely. First, our companion, Mr. Blackwall, made himself extremely pleasant, he was such a change from practical Mr. Knowles and homesick Arthur. Poor Mr. Knowles didn't half like it, being so completely put in the shade by this newcomer. Then it was very interesting to see the different Mormon ladies; some looked very pleasant, nice women, but most certainly had a dejected air, as if they felt they were degraded. The next morning we went a long walk through the streets. It was a beautiful day and everything looked lovely and bright.

Salt Lake City is not to be compared with any town in England or America; it is so utterly different from anything I have ever seen. The streets are very wide, and on both sides of them flow beautiful streams of crystal water brought from the mountains ten to twenty miles off. It is through this water that Brigham Young and his few followers transformed this sandy desert into a fertile farm; wherever it penetrates thither also does vegetation; wherever it ceases, grows nothing but the eternal sagebrush. The houses are for the most part low, built rather in the French style, and of wood whitewashed over, with green shutters and doors. This gives the city a fresh innocent appearance, especially as (as I have mentioned before) each house has its garden and orchard.

The Tabernacle is by far the most important building in Salt Lake City; then come Brigham's two houses, "The Lion" and "The Beehive," and a very pretty villa he is building for Mrs. Amelia Young, his last and most beloved wife. Most of his other wives either live in one of his two houses, or else have small houses round them in his garden. The only one of his wives we saw was Mrs. Eliza Young, No. 17, who separated from him, and is now lecturing on Mormonism all over America. She was staying at Walker's Hotel; she was rather a pretty woman at a distance, but decidedly coarse when you examined her near.

In the afternoon we went to hear Anson Pratt, an Apostle, and one of the original founders of the Mormon creed. During

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the summer the service is held in the Tabernacle, but as it is built of wood they are afraid of heating it, which of course makes it impossible to use it in winter. So each ward has its own meeting-house where they assemble on Sundays during the winter months. We went to the 13th ward. The congregation was mostly of the working-men's class. They seemed to be very attentive and earnest in their devotions. I noticed here particularly the dejected look of the women, as if they had continually on their mind their inferiority to their lords and masters. The service was begun by a hymn. Then a decidedly clever-looking man (a bishop) stood up and recited a prayer, in itself very good, but said more in a tone of "we only demand what we have a right to," than of humble supplication. Then the sacrament was handed round and another hymn sung, after which Anson Pratt got up and began his discourse; which Kate wrote down the following day, so that I shall benefit by her memory and transcribe her letter into my diary. . . .

And now that our party is breaking up, let us see in what relation they stand to each other. Arthur is a dear good affectionate creature, but he is not a good travelling companion. At times he would even be unpleasant, he would get so low-spirited and discontented about everything, and would not even allow you to take a pleasant and enthusiastic view of what you saw. Then he has no power of making himself and his party considered; he is too sensitive and fearful of giving anybody pain or trouble. He does not take that vivid interest in the country he passes through, which is so necessary in a travelling companion. But in spite of all these little faults I have a much more sisterly feeling towards Arthur than when we left England. I know his faults, therefore I like him. Kate and I can say that we have seen his worst side; I don't fancy he is often as irritable as he was sometimes with us, and irritability and indecision are his worst faults. Now for Mr. Knowles. About as opposite a man to our sensitive aristocratic brother-in-law as you could find. A plain, good and pure-hearted man, with a practical way of looking at everything, totally devoid of any kind of sentiment or poetry. He has a simple kind way of looking after you when you are ill, and seeing that you do not overtire yourself. He is not what I should call an interesting man, because he has

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no conversation, except on his own particular subjects, such as coal-mining, etc., and both Kate and I found it impossible to engage him in any literary or political conversations. And then he does not seem to seize the most interesting facts with regard to the country he passes through, but only remarks the smaller mechanical things. But to make up for this, he has a perfect temper, and is most kind and accommodating in any arrangements, and is always ready to make the best of it. We got rather tired of him towards the end, and I was rather glad when he left us at Omaha.

Here the diary breaks off suddenly, as did our delightful tour. At Chicago I have a dim remembrance of being carried out of the train in a state of semi-consciousness by my father and his friend Mr. George Pullman, who had been summoned by my sister to meet us, and during the following six weeks my devoted sister nursed me single-handed through scarlet fever, rheumatic fever and, breaking out the day before we were to have started for New York, an untoward attack of measles. I give the concluding entry of the American diary of 1873.

*December.*—The day before we leave New York ! Kate and father have gone out to dinner, so I shall have a little time to have a chat to myself. It seems a long, long time since I passed through the hall at Standish, feverish with excitement and longing to see the world, with sisters kissing us, and giving us a tearful good-bye, and with a file of wedding guests on each side, looking on with amusement and interest. I wonder if I have altered ? and if altered, whether for the better or the worse. I shall find my own level when I get home, that is one good thing in a large family.

One thing I want to do, when I get home, that is to make more a friend of Maggie. Hitherto I have lived a great deal too much apart from my sisters, partly from indolence, and partly from my unfrank disposition. Dear Kitty, I have got quite fond of her, she has been such a dear kind devoted sister. I can't

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imagine why she does not get on better at home.<sup>1</sup> Though we lived on the most intimate relationship for the last three months or more, I really have not found out one serious fault.

The American trip over, I start again on my career of self-culture; the MS. book becomes, in the main, extracts from and reviews of books read.

I am now busily engaged in studying. I am translating *Faust* and reading a novel of Tieck. *Faust* is wonderfully clever and often very beautiful. Putting the introduction piece out of the question, which is fearfully blasphemous, it might almost have been written by a good man, as a satire on the philosophers of the present day. *Faust* is supposed to have reached the zenith of human knowledge, and is shown how inadequate that knowledge is to make a man contented and happy. He first resolves to commit suicide, but is stopped by the feelings which the church bells and the songs of the choir on Easter morning awaken in him, by the sweet recollection of Eastertide in his youth, with its pleasures and religious impulses and sensations. As far as I have gone, I think it is far more powerful than Tasso, which I must say I neither admired nor liked. I have left off music almost entirely; I practise exercises and scales for half an hour, half because Mother wishes it, and half because I do not want to leave it off entirely. Drawing is what I should like to excel in, and now in the evenings, before I go and read Shakespeare to Miss Mitchell,<sup>2</sup> I make a point of copying one of the patterns in the School of Art book, and correcting it with compass and ruler. . . .

. . . I am not thoroughly contented with the way that I have passed this week [I record a fortnight later]. I have been extremely irregular in all my duties. I have not worked as much

<sup>1</sup> At that time my sister Kate, who had from childhood upwards been devoted to the poor and suffering, was claiming to be permitted to withdraw from "society" and take service under Miss Octavia Hill as rent-collector in East London—a claim that was acceded to in 1875.

<sup>2</sup> My little sister's nursery governess, whose mind I was apparently intent on cultivating.

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as I ought to have done, I have been lazy about my religious duties, I have been lazy in getting up; altogether I have been totally devoid of any method. Now I must really try and be more regular, go to bed early, get up early; practise and not be lazy about my drawing, else I shall never get on. I don't think it hurts at all, now and then, to read some of St. Paul's life instead of studying German, say twice a week. Father came home yesterday evening; it has been a very exciting week for him what with this Grand Trunk Meeting and the dissolution of Parliament. Poor G.T. has had another relapse: will it ever raise itself from this state of chronic disease? It is wearing Father out; he might have been able to go into Parliament and do some good for this country, except for G.T. I am in a complete muddle about politics. I think they are one of those things of which you cannot see the "right" or the "wrong." I can't help having a sort of sympathy with the Radicals, they are so enthusiastic, but I don't think that their time is come yet. They require a much more perfect state [of] society than that at present. But it is ridiculous for me to waste my time in scribbling about politics when I am so ignorant on all those questions. . . .

Sometimes I feel as if I must write, as if I must pour my poor crooked thoughts into somebody's heart, even if it be into my own. I am fascinated with that book of Joaquin Miller's, a lover of the wild, half-savage state, and a hater, because a stranger, of the civilised world. It's queer, after reading of nothing but the influence of civilisation on this or that nation, of progress, to hear a man boldly stand up and declare that civilisation often is degradation, that the savage is often better, wiser and "nearer God" than the civilised man; and that too from an American. Dear me! my trip to America seems to have opened a new world to me, and into which I seemed to have had a glimpse, a glimpse long enough to make one wish for another. [MS. diary, January 13, 1874.]

The American trip, with its vision of human nature in the melting-pot, had in fact increased "those intellectual difficulties of faith" already troubling me in the autumn of 1872.

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I am really trying to gain a firm belief for myself [I write a few days before we leave Standish for London]. I think it is no good going to others to have your belief cut out for you; you must examine, study, both the Bible and the lives of those who follow the Bible and those who don't. It is no sin to doubt, but it is a sin, after you have doubted, not to find out to the best of your capability why you doubt, and whether you have reasons to doubt. It was because no one doubted, and because every one was too idle to examine and to prove, that Christianity became so corrupted in the middle ages. I must make a faith for myself, and I must work, work, until I have. [MS. diary, April 4, 1874.]

But my lonely studies are broken into by the London season—a break which is described when we are again settled in Gloucestershire.

It is a long time since I last wrote in my diary. April 4th is the last date. It was just then that the whirl of the London season was beginning, which included me, though a school-room girl, in its rush. I enjoyed it immensely. It is seldom I have had so much pleasure in so small a space of time. And yet at times one was hardly happy. One looked from day to day for some new excitement, and in the intervals between these excitements one hardly knew what to do with oneself. The theatricals were the climax of all the pleasure and excitement. The getting up of them was in itself great fun, though I was only a looker-on. And then that tremendous excitement the week before them, the thought of my having to act Kate Hardcastle before two audiences of 200 people! But, however, that never came to pass; Maggie got well in time and carried off the laurels. The dance, oh! how I did enjoy that. It was the first dance I had ever been at as a grown-up young lady, and I felt considerably satisfied with myself, as I had two or three partners for each dance. Ah, vanity! vanity! Unfortunately for me, my ruling passion. Now this is enough about myself for the present; in what way did the London season affect the rest of the Potter family? Blanche was the excitement in the beginning of the season, as Georgie had been last year. [MS. diary, August 3, 1874.]

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There follows an affectionate but somewhat sarcastic account of the love affairs of my four unmarried sisters, ending in a critical estimate of the character and attainments of their various admirers. "The gentleman himself turned grave and severe, and at the end of the season looked very gloomy and yellow," I remark of one of them.

The gay life in London had weakened body and mind; and the autumn of 1874, spent at Standish alone with my mother, an elder sister, and the little one (my father with two daughters travelling again in Canada), finds me in bad health and desperately unhappy.

Here we are alone, Mother, Blanche and myself. Poor Mother, she has two rather broken crutches to lean upon. Blanche is a dear girl but she is unpractical and rather inclined to bore you; and as for me, I am, as Mother says, too young, too uneducated, and, worst of all, too frivolous, to be a companion to her. But, however, I must take courage, and try to change, and above all I must guard against that self-satisfaction which I consider is one of my worst faults. If I give in to it, it will prevent my ever improving myself. And the only way to cure myself of it is to go heart and soul into religion. It is a pity I ever went off the path of orthodox religion; it was a misfortune that I was not brought up to believe that to doubt was a crime. But since I cannot accept the belief of my Church without inward questioning, let me try and find a firm belief of my own, and let me act up to it. That is the most important thing. God help me to do it! [MS. diary, September 1874.]

By December I am down in the depths of egotistical misery.

I think that the great benefit one receives from keeping a diary is that it often leads one to examine oneself and that it is a vent for one's feelings, for those feelings in particular that one cannot communicate to other people. Since I have been poorly this autumn I have been, thinking of nothing but myself and I

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am sure that it is the most unhealthy state of mind. I am suffering from an indisposition which is decidedly trying to one's health of mind as it prevents one from doing much, and that always makes one discontented and low-spirited. I have never felt so low-spirited as I have this autumn. I have felt for the first time in my life how much unhappiness there is in life. But one has not been given the choice of existing or not existing, and all one has to think of is how to live the best and most useful and the happiest life. I have come to the conclusion that the only real happiness is devoting oneself to making other people happy. I feel that it is very discouraging to lose so much valuable time when I might be studying, but I believe that if I take this ill-health in a proper way, and bear it bravely and cheerfully, I shall improve my character more than I should have improved my mind in the same time. And character weighs more than intellect in the scales of life. [MS. diary, December 1874.]

The breakdown in health became serious, and before the next London season I am settled in Bournemouth as a "parlour boarder" in a fashionable girls' school, free to spend my time in lonely study and religious meditation. It is here that I seek mental security in traditional Christianity, and decide to be confirmed and become a regular communicant. The "high church" was attended by the school, but I preferred the "low church" and the remarkably eloquent evangelical preacher, Mr. Eliot (afterwards a canon of Windsor), became my spiritual director and prepared me for confirmation. The following entries describe my religious experiences during the next nine months. From these I gather that the doctrine of the Atonement remained a stumbling-block, not because it struck me as irrational, but because it seemed to me immoral.

*Easter Eve.*—The day before I receive for the first time the Holy Sacrament. The last month or two has been a very



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solemn epoch in my life, and may God grant that I may never cease remembering the vows which I have made before God and man, that I intend to become a true Christian, that is, a true disciple and follower of Jesus Christ, making Him my sole aim in life. And now I am going to receive the great sacraments which He Himself instituted as a perpetual means of remembering His visit on earth. God grant that it may really strengthen me. There are many things which remain still mysteries to me, like the doctrine of Atonement. The idea that God demanded that some innocent person should die for the sins of men, and that, by the voluntary death of that just man, wicked and damned men, who would not otherwise have been saved, are saved, is repugnant to me. I firmly believe that Jesus Christ has and will save the world, but not so particularly by His death as by His Word, which He came down to preach. His whole preaching seems to me to indicate that He never says that we shall be saved by His death but by belief in Him and in the word which He has preached. "And this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "He that believeth on me shall have eternal life." "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you they are spirit, they are life." And this last was said after that long discourse about His flesh as the bread of life. And yet it is evident that every one of His disciples believed in the Atonement as a saving doctrine, and Christ Himself seems to set it forth once as a great truth in the institution of the Lord's Supper. [MS. diary, March 27, 1875.]

But the main struggle was with my own lack of morality.

It is very discouraging to find that after forming such high resolutions, after reading and studying and getting as one would have thought out of the world of vanity and vexation of spirit, that directly one gets into society one talks such confounded nonsense. Confounded, or rather confounding, in the literal sense of the term. It is such a dreadful thing to think that on the Sunday one has taken the Holy Sacrament, and by doing that renewed as it were the vow one made on the day of one's confirmation, that one should [be] guilty of talking frivolously. As it is, my Sunday is the most unholy day in the week. I can-

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not sympathise with the Sullivans<sup>1</sup> in their views of religion. Oh that I had more charity, true charity, so that I might see and reverence and not sneer at and despise what I do not understand ! God only can give me help. I am so weak, so vain, so liable to fall into self-confidence. . . . [MS. diary, July 1875.]

I must confess I am much more sorry to leave Standish [after the summer holiday] than I expected. The last fortnight I have enjoyed very much and have been blessed with good health. But I hope at Bournemouth to grow much stronger, and I must be resolved to allow no pleasure or interesting study to interfere with care of health; and I must be particularly careful of my diet. The two studies I have taken up, Jewish History and English Law, are both very interesting. I have chosen the latter because it is so thoroughly different from the former, and employs a different set of muscles. I must try and not become egotistical in my thoughts, for that is a great danger when one leads a solitary life, for my life with regard to thought is completely solitary at Stirling House. I propose every Sunday to write a short sketch of my work during the week, and whether I can conscientiously say that I have not transgressed the rules of health. I must also above everything endeavour not to think myself superior to the other inmates of Stirling House, because I have been brought out more by circumstances and encouraged to reason on subjects which other girls have mostly been told to take on faith. Both systems have their advantages and disadvantages. But perhaps the mistake I felt most was joining gossiping conversations. And this is certainly most difficult,

<sup>1</sup> Two old friends of my father were "authorised" to take me out walks—Admiral Sullivan, a fanatical Protestant but jolly old Irishman, with whose family I spent Sundays, they being attendants at Mr. Eliot's church; and Admiral Grey, whose courteous manners and broad culture remain a pleasant memory. But my particular friend at Stirling House was Oscar Beringer, who gave the girls music lessons and afterwards became famed as an accomplished pianist. Finding that I had "musical feeling" but no musical faculty, he spent the time allotted to me in playing his favourite pieces and explaining to me their meaning—a type of "music lesson" which I appreciated when a few years later I spent six months in Germany attending concerts and operas.

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because it in a great way necessitates keeping myself aloof from the girls' society. [MS. diary, September 19, 1875.]

I have this morning been disappointed in going to receive the Holy Sacrament. Somehow or other I feel I neither understand nor appreciate it, though I believe it helps me. I think it is the constant allusion to atonement in the English communion service which so distresses me. I cannot at present believe in that doctrine. It disgusts me. Probably I completely misunderstand it. But I believe that the sacrament ought to be regarded, first as an earnest avowal of your belonging to the Church of Christ both to God, yourself and mankind; secondly, as a sign of your penitence and your desire to become better; and thirdly, the receiving of the sacrament ought to be stepping-stones in the path of Holiness. I wish I could become more truthful. It is such a dreadful fault, and yet I find myself constantly telling downright lies. God grant that I may earnestly strive to cure myself of this great sin. I do not know whether I am right in giving all the time I have to spare for the study of religion completely to the Old Testament. But it appears to me that by watching the Light glimmer through the minds of the prophets I shall be able to appreciate better the full glory and greatness of the Religion of God revealed through the words of Christ. [MS. diary, October 3, 1875.]

Lied again to-day. I will make a practice of noting these lies, by putting a cross for every one to the day of the month. I am quite convinced that it is a most disastrous habit. [MS. diary, October 4, 1875.]

Another week passed. I have read only pretty well. I suppose I cannot expect to do much in the way of quiet study. But let me devote my energy to becoming truthful and to guarding against that feeling of satisfaction and vanity, and to speaking not for effect but from conviction. Oh! that by the next time I take the sacrament I may be more truthful and less vain. [MS. diary, October 10, 1875.]

Have read very regularly last week; But I am afraid this week it will be impossible to do much in that way as I am already in

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bed with a headache, which feels decidedly bad. [MS. diary, October 18, 1875.]

A beautiful sermon from Mr. Eliot. It seemed to awaken me to the truth that I am rather inclined to rest on the slight improvements I have made. I must work harder, try and become more truthful both in my acts and in my conversation, less vain and admiration-seeking, and never let my thoughts rest with complacency on any little distinction I may have of body or mind. I seem to get on very slowly with my studies, and it is rather discouraging sometimes to get so little done. [MS. diary, October 31, 1875.]

The reason why I tell so many stories is pride and vanity. It is very often from the wish that people may think me or my people better in one way or another, that I exaggerate so fearfully. I see clearly if one wishes really to become truthful one must seek to be so in one's smallest actions and words. [MS. diary, December 9, 1875.]

I am going to see Mr. Eliot to-morrow, and to tell the truth I rather dread it. Why I do not know. I suppose it is because *I am not quite sure what I am going to say to him. It is a great want of courage, for of course it must be a great advantage for a young student of religion to be able to ask advice and explanation of a man who has spent all his life in the study and practice of it.* [MS. diary, December 16, 1875.]

The dreadful interview is over. I felt decidedly nervous and was unable to say all that I wished. A girl is at a decided disadvantage sitting opposite to a clergyman and discussing religious doctrines. Mr. Eliot said that the doctrine of atonement being found in the Scriptures we ought to believe in it, as it is only through them that we can gain any knowledge of God or his dealings with men. I answered that I did not see that the doctrine of the Atonement came prominently forward in the Gospels, and hardly at all in Christ's own words. He then asked me if I did not consider that the Epistles stood on the same footing in this claim to infallibility as the Gospels. I said I thought not, as I considered the latter to be the faithful record

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of Christ's own words, while the former were the writings of good men, many of whom had learnt at the feet of Christ, but who could hardly claim for their words the authority of their Master. (In studying St. Paul's Epistles I must be careful to examine how much authority he *does* claim.) He finally lent me Dr. Crawford's book on the doctrine of the Atonement. I hope when I return home I shall not lose the little earnestness I have gained; that I shall be diligent in the study of religion. I do not want to "come out," and I hope I shall have enough determination and firmness to carry my point. The family does not really want another come out member; they are almost too many as it is. I wish my aim in life to be the understanding and acting up to religion. Before I can enter society with advantage I must conquer two great faults, love of admiration and untruth, and I must become a little more settled in my religious belief. [MS. diary, December 18, 1875.]

The determination not to "come out" seems to have vanished after a series of house parties and dances in Gloucestershire; and at the conventional age of eighteen I joined my sisters in the customary pursuits of girls of our class, riding, dancing, flirting and dressing-up, an existence without settled occupation or personal responsibility, having for its end nothing more remote than elaborately expensive opportunities for getting married. It was during this round of gaiety that I became for the first time in my life intimate with one of my sisters. My sister Margaret, next in age to me and four years older, was in many ways the most intellectually gifted of the Potter girls. Warm-hearted and self-sacrificing towards her own family, a cynical *gamine* towards the rest of the world, an omnivorous reader and witty reflector of all that was racy in English, German and French literature, and all that was libertarian and iconoclastic in philosophy, ancient and modern, she proved to be the best of comrades in the hazards of the marriage-market, and the most stimulating

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companion in the long rides and walks, continuous reading and discussion with which we whiled away the dull months in Gloucestershire or Westmorland between bouts of London society, country-house visiting and foreign travel.

Some parts of this autumn have been very sweet [I note in the autumn of 1878]. We three sisters have seen much of each other; and Maggie and I particularly have had a perfect communion of pursuits and ideas. We had a delightful little trip among our sublime little hills; and read through the first two volumes of *Modern Painters* together; and this experience has inspired us with a wish to go sketching and leading tours together, should we remain lonely spinsters.

Maggie left this morning.<sup>1</sup> I feel her loss terribly. We are perfectly intimate and at one with each other and when I am with her I want no other society. We have had a very happy time here together—have read, talked, walked and slept together, and now she is gone it is a dreary blank. I do hope the dear girl will enjoy herself and come back much happier and more contented with life *as she is likely to get it*. I must go plodding on—towards some goal that may never be reached. Ah me! Courage, *mon amie*, courage. [MS. diary, October 1879.]

The London season of 1876 came and went and with it disappeared my feeble hold on orthodox Christianity. The restless and futile activities of society life, and the inevitable reaction in self-disgust and corresponding depreciation of other people's motives, did not constitute a fruitful soil for religious experience; and even if there had not been a sudden revolt of the intellect I doubt whether I should have remained a practising Christian. But it so happened that during these very months intellectual curiosity swept me into currents of thought at that time stirring the minds of

<sup>1</sup> During the winter of 1879–80 my sisters Margaret and Kate were travelling in Egypt with Canon and Mrs. Barnett and Herbert Spencer. (There is an entertaining account of this trip in the *Life of Canon Barnett*, vol. i. pp. 226–56.)

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those who frequented the outer, more unconventional and, be it added, the more cultivated circles of London society; movements which, though unconnected with and in some ways contradictory to each other, had the common characteristic of undermining belief in traditional Christianity. The most immediately subversive of these ferments, because it seemed to provide an alternative form of religious emotion, arose out of the opening up of the religions of the Far East: ancient cultures destined to be reflected during the twentieth century in the new and strange varieties of mysticism now current in Central Europe, the United States of America, and, to a lesser extent, in Scandinavia and Great Britain. More widely and deeply influential, because it was associated with the great discoveries of mid-Victorian science, and was, moreover, closely connected with the conduct of affairs, was the then-called "religion of science": that is, an implicit faith that by the methods of physical science, and by these methods alone, could be solved all the problems arising out of the relation of man to man and of man towards the universe.

I have indeed altered my religious belief this last six months to an extent I should never have thought possible a year ago. I see now that the year I spent at Boune-mouth I was vainly trying to smother my instinct of truth in clinging to the old faith. And now that I have shaken off the chains of the beautiful old faith, shall I rise to something higher, or shall I stare about me like a newly liberated slave, unable to decide which way to go, and perhaps the worse for being freed from the service of a kind master? Do I look on death and trouble with less calmness than I used? [MS. diary, August 16, 1876.]

It was characteristic of the circle in which I grew up that ideas and literature, however metaphysical the generalisation, or however classic the book, were inextricably mixed up in my mind with the affairs of yesterday and the problems

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of to-morrow. Thus, it was an ex-Indian civil servant, a pioneer in Sanscrit scholarship, who became my guide in a superficial study of Eastern thought. Brian Hodgson, a Gloucestershire neighbour, rode to hounds, and took his place in the County as one among many country gentlemen, rather than as a scholar of international reputation.<sup>1</sup> A delightful old man, then verging on eighty years of age, he was not overtly heterodox with regard to the supremacy of the Christian religion and the Anglo-Saxon race; he was, indeed, too modest to be explicitly a rebel. But, not without a touch of intellectual malice, he encouraged the young enquirer to question the superiority of Western over Eastern civilisation. For he had behind him a distinguished but officially unsuccessful career in the government of India. Political Resident in Nepaul during the critical years 1823-43, he had spent his leisure in mastering the languages, literature and religions of the people he was

<sup>1</sup> Brian Houghton Hodgson (1800-1894) was, in his day, one of the most distinguished scholars of Oriental languages, religions and customs, of a world-wide reputation very little appreciated in the country of his birth. Going to India from Haileybury College as a writer in 1816, he became Assistant Commissioner of Kumaon, adjoining Nepaul, to which native state he was appointed in 1820; remaining there for twenty-three years, being confirmed as Resident in 1833. He was exceptionally successful in his difficult post, but at last incurred the displeasure of the most autocratic of Governor-Generals, Lord Ellenborough, who summarily, in 1843, deprived him of his appointment; whereupon Hodgson retired from the service. Besides endless papers in the proceedings of learned societies, his principal works were: *Illustration of the Literature and Religion of the Buddhists*, 1841; *The Koch, Bodo and Dhimal People*, 1847; *Essays . . . on Nepaul and Thibet*, 1874; *Miscellaneous Essays relating to Religious Subjects*, 1880. He was omitted from the *Dictionary of National Biography*, but died in time to be given a place in the First Supplement; and there is a short biography by Sir W. W. Hunter, 1896.



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supposed to serve, and in acquiring, at his own cost, a wonderful collection of ancient Buddhist scripts, which attracted learned commentators in France and Germany, and eventually even in England. Meanwhile he had lost his foothold on the ladder of official promotion, largely through an unmeasured denunciation of the educational policy of the East India Company, endorsed by the Governor-General and the Board of Control, in deciding to use the English language as the sole medium of education, so far as Government subsidies were concerned, of all the races of British India. At that time the dominant intellectual influence at Calcutta was wielded by the greatest of our contemporary rhetoricians. To Macaulay's unscientific and slap-dash intellect, it seemed that there were only two alternatives open: on the one hand English, with its Shakespeare and its Bible, its utilitarian ethics and commercialised administration; and, on the other, the ancient Sanscrit Scriptures, reinforced with Persian poems and Arabic philosophy, with their preposterous mythologies and their oversubtle, and therefore, to his mind, ridiculous metaphysics. As Macaulay put it, in his famous Minute:

The question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language [English], we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared with our own; whether, when we can teach European science, we shall teach systems which by universal confession, whenever they differ from those of Europe, differ for the worse; when we can patronise sound philosophy and true history, we shall continue to teach at the public expense medical doctrines which would move to laughter the girls of an English boarding-school; history abounding in kings fifty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long; geography made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*, p. 402 of vol. ii.

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"But why not the vernaculars?" insisted the wise and learned administrator at Kathmandu: a question which insinuated that Macaulay had been guilty, in his vivid phrases, of the fallacy of the suppressed alternative. I recall, by the way, that it was Brian Hodgson, in his talks about India, who explained to me the peculiar liability of rulers belonging to an alien race and civilisation to this particular lapse, alike in abstract logic and human sympathy: their habitual neglect to explore the many alternative ways of reaching the desired end, so as to discover the method of approach most in harmony with the deep-rooted tradition, habits and ideals of the people they governed. Unfortunately, the man learned in ancient lore and native custom was no rhetorician: he had not even a command of what ought to have been his own vernacular, as one British official addressing another, namely, sound "blue-book English," never deviating, either in thought or expression, from the commonplace and the conventional. He unpacked his soul in a series of lengthy epistles to a local journal, which he got reissued as a slim octavo. I can now see that this queer book, *Pre-eminence of the Vernaculars, or the Anglicists answered, being four letters on the Education of the People of India*, is a mine of administrative wisdom and philosophic insight. But owing to its involved and pedantic phraseology,<sup>1</sup> and its far-fetched

<sup>1</sup> Since writing about Brian Hodgson I have come across<sup>9</sup> the following account of him by Sir Joseph Hooker, from which I gather that this great scientist found him as hard to understand as I did. "My friend, Brian Hodgson, was an arch-Buddhist scholar, and we spent many a long evening in the Himalaya over Buddhism; but his knowledge was too profound to be communicated intelligently to a novice. I have his works. I fancy he did more by the collection of materials, than by his dissertations, to advance the study" (*Life and Letters of Sir Joseph*

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allusions to Indian and English classics, it was quite unreadable to my uncultured mind; and after glancing at its pages with baffled curiosity, I turned with zest to the other books he lent me, his own intricate but enlightening essays on the languages, literature and religions of Nepaul and Tibet; the works of his French commentators, St. Hilaire and Burnouf, and, more fascinating to the immature student, Beal's translations of the *Chinese Scriptures* and Monier Williams' many volumes on Indian thought and literature.

The immediate result of all this reading, illuminated by talks with Brian Hodgson, was the sweeping away of my belief in the Christian Church and its Bible as the sole or even as the pre-eminent embodiment of the religious impulse in the mind of man; in fact, as the only alternative to scientific materialism. Hinduism, with its poetical metaphors and subtle reasoning, a mentality deeply rooted in an ancient and enduring civilisation of teeming millions,

*Dalton Hooker, O.M., G.C.S.I., by Leonard Huxley, vol. ii. p. 433).*

And here is a description by the same author, of Hodgson in 1848, which gives another version of his dismissal from the Residency of Nepaul: "Hodgson is a particularly gentlemanly and agreeable person, but he looks sickly; he is handsome, with a grand forehead and delicate, finely-cut features; when arrayed in his furs and wearing the Scotch bonnet and eagle feather, with which it is his pleasure to adorn himself, he would make a striking picture. He is a clever person and can be wickedly sarcastic; he called Lord Ellenborough (the haughtiest nobleman in all India) a 'knave and coxcomb' to his face (true enough, though not exactly a fact to be *told* with impunity), and then squibbed his lordship; you must know that Lord E. had previously applied to Hodgson the sobriquet of an *Ornithological Humbug*, and had turned him out of his Residency at Nepaul because he had (by Lord Auckland's desire) clapped the Rajah into confinement. In short, Lord Ellenborough and Mr. Hodgson kept up a running fire till his Lordship left the country" (*ibid.* vol. i. p. 262).

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threw into the shade for me the barbaric Jehovah of the Jews and the mean doings of the kings, and even stretched beyond the fervid eloquence, mostly about current events, of the prophets of the tribes of Judah and Israel. Rightly or wrongly—and here I am not defending a thesis, I am only describing the state of mind of a Victorian girl in her teens—the Buddha and his philosophy seemed logically and ethically superior to the Christ and the teachings of the New Testament. The majestic impersonality of Sakya-muni; his aloofness from the joys and sorrows of mortal man; his very lack of what is called humanity, attracted me. If there were any validity in asceticism, in the deliberate denial of physical instinct and the persistent abstention from worldly doings, then why not renounce, at once and for all time, the world and the flesh, and seek by prayer and meditation, possibly by the development of an incipient or arrested faculty, to become pure spirit? Was it because of the compromising attitude of Jesus of Nazareth (as interpreted by Paul) towards the world that the Christian Church, unlike the Buddhist monks or the Hindu Saddhus, had found itself entangled in temporal dynasties and national wars, and had grasped at secular as well as spiritual power? Further, Buddhist metaphysics had at least a superficial likeness to the philosophy of modern science. The agnosticism of Buddha as to an ultimate cause was even more complete than that of Herbert Spencer. Unlike the crude eternal bliss and eternal damnation of the Christian Church, the doctrine of Karma seemed in harmony with such assumptions of modern science as the universality of causation and the persistence of force. Even the transmigration of souls appeared as a far-off precursor of the doctrine of the evolution of the human species from other forms of life. Finally the mysterious Nirvana, and the

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attainment of this unconditional blessedness by ridding yourself of your own personality, fascinated my imagination. Living in a stronghold of capitalism, surrounded by the pleasure-grounds of London society, I distrusted human personality, whether I observed it at work in my own consciousness or in the behaviour of other people. And yet Buddhism and Hinduism found in me no convert. All that happened was my detachment from Christianity.

It is no longer a wonder to me [I jot down in my diary at the end of some hundreds of pages of extracts and abstracts] that Buddhism does not exercise much power over the nations professing it. The great doctrine it taught was false: that man's aim in life was to be mainly a selfish one, *i.e.* to rid himself of the evil of existence. Starting from the idea that life was an evil and would ever continue one, they proceeded to check every desire, good and bad; to run before death, so as not to be overtaken by that great Changer before they had plunged themselves into non-existence—or rather into the supreme impersonality of the universe. How could a religion which—though enjoining on man every passive virtue—forbade the exercise of the faculties, regenerate or advance the growth of man? The seed of selfishness grounded in superstition is contained in all the ancient religions of the world: and it is this seed, small at first and hidden by a beautiful morality, which eventually overthrows one religion after the other. Man as he progresses cannot shut his eyes to the fact that he is but an insignificant part of the universe; that he best fulfils the object of his existence in trying humbly to understand and, in so far as they relate to him, live in harmony with the laws revealed by nature and his consciousness, without hope or wish for supernatural reward.

But Buddhism, though based on falsehood, gathered round it, as it grew, a most lovely morality and a breadth and poetry in its theory of the origin of all things, which I do not think we find in the more positive theology of Christianity. It guarded as sacred the Great Mystery, and that is the reason, I believe, of its charm to modern thinkers. [MS. diary, September 13, 1877.]

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I have never been so struck with the truth that there is a great mystery [I repeat a few days later] as when reading the metaphysical reasonings of these Eastern philosophers. They seem to have had an intuitive feeling that each hypothesis advanced was insufficient to account for the origin of all things; and they expressed, as far as it is possible to express in words, the idea of the unconditioned which was according to them the absolutely real underlying the relatively real. [MS. diary, September 16, 1877.]

This rejection of all traditional religion—of the underlying philosophy of Buddhism as well as that of Christianity—was made easier for me because it was during the autumn of 1876 that I thought I had reached a resting-place for the soul of man, from which he could direct his life according to the dictates of pure reason, without denying the impulse to reverence the Power that controlled the Universe. This resting-place was then termed, by its youngest and most uncompromising adherents, the Religion of Science. The God was The Unknowable: the prophet was Herbert Spencer. Prayer might have to go, but worship would remain. Looking back on my intimacy with the philosopher, it is certainly surprising to me that I do not appear to have read any of his books until I was eighteen years of age. Under date of November 1876 I find an extract from *Social Statics*—a passage which, oddly enough, I cannot now trace in any edition to which I have access, but which it is clear that I did not invent! I quote this eloquent expression of philosophic optimism with regard to the evolution of the universe because it convinced me at the time, although it failed me later on. Indeed, it is a favourite speculation of mine that Herbert Spencer himself eventually discovered that there was no evidence in the findings of physical science for any such assumption of essential beneficence in the working of natural forces; and that the

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mental misery of his later life was not altogether unconnected with the loss of the inspiring creed with which he began his *Synthetic Philosophy*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From Herbert Spencer's references, during the last years of his life, to current scientific controversy, I gathered that he was profoundly disturbed by some of the newer hypotheses of the physicists; but as I had neither knowledge of, nor interest in these questions I failed to understand the cause of this unrest. In answer to my enquiry my friend Bertrand Russell suggests the following explanation:

"I don't know whether he was ever made to realise the implications of the second law of thermodynamics; if so, he might well be upset. The law says that everything tends to uniformity and a dead level, diminishing (not increasing) heterogeneity. Energy is only useful when unevenly concentrated, and the law says that it tends to become evenly diffused. This law used to worry optimists about the time when Spencer was old. On the other hand, his optimism was always groundless, so his pessimism may have been equally so; perhaps the cause of both was physiological" (Letter from Bertrand Russell to Beatrice Webb, June 4, 1923).

It is interesting to note that Charles Darwin seems in his own range of subjects to have shared this strange optimism with regard to the correspondence of the nature of things with a human scale of values. In a letter to Sir Charles Lyell he writes:

"When you contrast natural selection and 'improvement,' you seem always to overlook (for I do not see how you can deny) that every step in the natural selection of each species implies improvement in that species in relation to its conditions of life. No modification can be selected without it be an improvement or advantage. Improvement implies, I suppose, each form obtaining many parts or organs, all excellently adapted for their functions. As each species is improved, and as the number of forms will have increased, if we look to the whole course of time, the organic condition of life for other forms will become more complex, and there will be a necessity for other forms to become improved, or they will be exterminated; and I can see no limit to this process of improvement, without the intervention of any other and direct principle of improvement. All this seems to me quite compatible with certain forms fitted for simple conditions, remaining unaltered, or being degraded.

"If I have a second edition, I will reiterate 'Natural Selection and, as a general consequence, Natural Improvement'" (*The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, vol. ii. p. 177, 1887 edition).

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It is in truth a sad sight for any one who has been, what Bacon recommends, "a servant and interpreter of nature," to see these political schemers, with their clumsy mechanisms, trying to supersede the great laws of existence. Such an one, no longer regarding the mere outside of things, has learned to look for the secret forces by which they are upheld. After patient study this chaos of phenomena into the midst of which he was born has begun to generalise itself to him, and where there seemed nothing but confusion, he can now discern the dim outline of a gigantic plan. No accidents, no chance; but everywhere order and completeness.

Throughout he finds the same vital principles, ever in action, ever successful, and embracing the minutest details. Growth is unceasing; and though slow, all powerful; showing itself here in some rapidly developing outline, and there, where necessity is less, exhibiting only the fibrils of incipient organisation. Irresistible as it is subtle, he sees, in the working of these changes, a power that bears onwards peoples and governments, regardless of their theories, and schemes, and prejudices—a power which sucks the life out of their landed institutions, shrivels up their state parchments with a breath, paralyses long venerated authorities, obliterates the most deeply graven laws, makes statesmen recant and puts prophets to the blush, buries cherished customs, shelves precedents, and which, before men are conscious of the fact, has wrought a revolution in all things, and filled the world with a higher life. Always towards perfection is the mighty movement—towards a complete development and more un-mixed good; subordinating in its universality all petty irregularities and fallings back, as the curvature of the earth subordinates mountains and valleys. Even in evils, the student learns to recognise only a struggling beneficence. But above all, he is struck with the inherent sufficingness of things and with the complex simplicity of principles. Day by day he sees further beauty. Each new fact illustrates more clearly some recognised law, or discloses some unconceived completeness; contemplation thus perpetually discovering to him a higher harmony, and cherishing in him a deeper faith.<sup>1</sup> "Who could wish for a grander faith than this!" [I exclaim at the end of this extract].

<sup>1</sup> *Social Statics*, Herbert Spencer.



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There follows in my diary, evidently copied out at the same time, the well-known passage now standing at the end of Part I of *First Principles*, but originally appearing in *Social Statics*, where it is to be found only in the earlier editions.

Not as adventitious, therefore, will the wise man regard the faith that is in him—not as something which may be slighted, and made subordinate to calculations of policy; but as supreme authority to which all his actions should blend. The highest truth conceivable by him he will fearlessly utter; and will endeavour to get embodied in fact his purest idealisms: knowing that, let what may come of it, he is thus playing his appointed part in the world—knowing that, if he can get done the thing he aims at—well: if not—well also; though not *so* well. [MS. diary, November 1876.]

It was during the six years of irresponsible girlhood (1876-1882) that I tried the religion of science and found it wanting. Memory is a risky guide in tracing the ups and downs of belief and unbelief; gaps in the argument are apt to be filled in, and the undulating line of feeling becomes artificially straightened. As being free from the fallacy of “being wise after the event,” I prefer the contemporary entries in the MS. diary. But this string of quotations from the subjective musings of a girl conveys its own false implications; inevitably these extracts emphasise the hidden over the outer life. Somewhere down in the depths the Ego that affirms and the Ego that denies were continuously wrangling over the duty and destiny of man; but it was only now and again that their voices were heard above the din of everyday life. For the most part consciousness was listening to the promptings of physical instinct and personal vanity, to the calls of family affection and casual comradeship—above all, to the exciting messages of the master-

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wave of intellectual curiosity. Thus, during the spring and summer months of most years, riding, dancing, flirting and dressing-up absorbed current energy; six months out of these six years were spent in the Rhineland, reading German literature and listening to German music; another six months in Italy, in churches and galleries revelling in Italian art. Nor were family events unexciting. My sister Kate, after an apprenticeship under Octavia Hill, had become a rent-collector in Whitechapel; and it was when staying with her in London that I first became aware of the meaning of the poverty of the poor. The three other elder sisters had found their mates; and with the marriage of my sister Margaret, though she remained an affectionate sister, I lost my one intimate friend. As against this loss there was the rapidly growing intellectual comradeship with my mother during the latter years of her life, which I have described in the last chapter.

Better reflected in the current diary than any of these episodes is the mass of miscellaneous reading, fiction, biography, history and politics, with which I occupied the lonely autumn and winter months spent in Westmorland and Gloucestershire. And here I think it well to note that, although as a girl I was an omnivorous reader, I had an unusually restricted literary taste. Owing to a mental defect, which I believe is not so uncommon as it is unrecognised and unrecorded, the whole realm of poetry was closed to me: I was poetry blind, as some persons are colour blind. Rhythm, rhyme, cadence, in fact the "magic of words" in any of its forms, paralysed my intelligence; before I could understand the meaning of a poem I had laboriously to translate it into workaday prose, thereby challenging the accuracy of every term and the relevance of every metaphor. When that was done, the meaning

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had evaporated. "That words have meanings is just the difficulty," observes, with refreshing frankness, the great Hindu poet. "That is why the poet has to turn and twist them in metre and verse, so that the meaning may be held somewhat in check, and the feeling allowed a chance to express itself,"<sup>1</sup> he adds by way of explanation. Thus, Racine and Corneille (insisted on by my mother because she thought they would improve our French style !) brought to me no conviction that they knew anything about the men and affairs they portrayed; and their long rhymed couplets appeared to me to introduce an element of the ridiculous. Tennyson, the idol of the day, was even worse; his sentimental imageries seemed to me incomprehensible nonsense; and I have to confess that, in spite of the glamour with which my father enveloped Shakespeare, his plays and poems, except for some isolated passages, bored me. Of all the great authors whose works I tried to read, only Goethe

<sup>1</sup> I give the remainder of the extract, as it expresses exactly my difficulty in appreciating poetry. "But does one write poetry to explain any matter? What is felt within the heart tries to find outside shape as a poem. So when, after listening to a poem, any one says he has not understood, I feel nonplussed. If some one smells a flower and says he does not understand, the reply to him is: there is nothing to understand, it is only a scent. If he persists, saying: *that* I know, but what does it all *mean*? Then one has either to change the subject, or make it more abstruse by saying that the scent is the shape which the universal joy takes in the flower" (Then follow the words quoted in the text) . . . "This utterance of feeling," he continues, "is not the statement of a fundamental truth, or a scientific fact, or a useful moral precept. Like a tear or a smile it is but a picture of what is taking place within. If science or philosophy may gain anything from it they are welcome, but that is not the reason of its being. If while crossing a ferry you can catch a fish you are a lucky man, but that does not make the ferry-boat a fishing-boat, nor should you abuse the ferryman if he does not make fishing his business" (*My Reminiscences*, by Rabindranath Tagore, 1917, p. 222).

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dominated my mind. For many years I felt towards him as if he were an intimate friend, sharing out his wealth of experience and knowledge, and revealing to me an entirely new ideal of personal morality, of the relation of art to science, and of art and science to the conduct of life. After Goethe, in order of influence, came the translations of the Greek classics, to which I devoted the best part of a year; more particularly Thucydides and Plato. These certainly altered my mind. Of the translations of Latin authors I recall only Marcus Aurelius ["He wrote in Greek," interjects The Other One! "Pedant!" I retort], a book that superseded *The Imitation of Christ* as a manual of devotion; and Lucretius, whose cold wit and searching logic alternately attracted and repelled me. Of French authors, Diderot, Voltaire, Balzac, Flaubert and Zola stand out as teaching me what I wanted to know. Among English writers I had no favourites; it was always the particular subject-matter that I was after, and the personal outlook and literary style of the author seemed to me relatively unimportant. I may add that this cramped literary taste was afterwards accentuated by the craft of the researcher. There comes a time when a heap of illiterate MS. minutes, or bundles of local Acts relating to particular towns, are easier and more enticing reading, tested by the time one can stick at it, than sparkling wit, or the most original and most perfectly expressed wisdom, on subjects for the moment irrelevant. One of the unforeseen pleasures of old age is the faint beginning of a liking for exquisite literature irrespective of its subject-matter.

The following entries in the diary, scattered over five or six years and given in order of date, may be taken as notes of the controversy between the Ego that denies and the Ego that affirms the validity of religious mysticism.

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This book, begun as a diary, ends in extracts and abstracts of books. One's interest in one's own character ceases to be so absorbing, as one grows in knowledge. Christianity certainly made one more egotistical, more desirous to secure one's own salvation. Whatever may be the faults, or rather the shortcomings, of the new religion, it accomplishes one thing: it removes the thoughts from that wee bit of the world called self to the great whole—the individual has no part in it; it is more than silent as to his future existence. Man sinks down to comparative insignificance; he is removed in degree but not in kind from the mere animal and vegetable. In truth, it requires a noble nature to profess with cheerfulness this religion; and the ideal it presents to us is far higher than any presented by the great religions of the world. [September 13, 1877.]

Mr. Spencer's *First Principles* has had certainly a very great influence on my feelings and thoughts. It has made me feel so happy and contented. . . . I do admire that still, reverent consciousness of the great mystery; that fearless conviction that no advance in science can take away the beautiful and elevating consciousness of something greater than humanity. One has always feared that when the orthodox religion vanished, no beauty, no mystery would be left, but nothing but what could and would be explained and become commonplace—but instead of that each new discovery of science will increase our wonder at the Great Unknown and our appreciation of the Great Truth. [MS. diary, December 15, 1878.]

The religion of science has its dark side. It is bleak and dreary in sorrow and ill-health. And to those whose lives are one continual suffering it has but one word to say—suicide. If you cannot bear it any longer, and if no ties of duty turn you from extinguishing that little flame of your existence—depart in peace: cease to exist. It is a dreadful thought. It can never be the religion of a "suffering humanity." The time may come, and I believe will come, when human life will be sufficiently happy and full to be unselfish. But there are long ages yet to be passed, and generations of men will still cry in their misery for another life to compensate for their lifelong sorrow and suffering. [MS. diary, March 8, 1878.]

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As it may be interesting in future years to know what my religious convictions were at nineteen, I might as well state roughly what are my vague beliefs. I do not see that there is sufficient evidence, either for believing in a future life or in a personal creator of the universe. I at present believe (by no means without inward fear at my audacity) that Christianity is in no way superior in kind, though in degree, to the other great religions; that it was a natural product of the human mind; that Christianity is not the highest religion conceivable; and that the idea of working out your own salvation, of doing good, and believing blindly, in order to arrive at eternal bliss, is, through its intense selfishness, an immoral doctrine. I believe also that, as soon as our religion becomes truly unselfish, the enormous interest in speculations as to the future existence of the individual will die out. But what seems to me clear is that we are at a very early period of man's existence, and that we have only just arrived at the true basis of knowledge: and that bright and glorious days are in store for our successors on this earth. [MS. diary, March 31, 1878.]

. . . One thing is clear, Goethe wishes to impress on his reader the advantages of liberty, of unrestrained liberty in thought and deed. I do not mean licentiousness, *i.e.* giving free scope to your passions: this involves an enslavement of the intellect, or rather the cessation of its rightful activity. But Goethe would go on the principle, both in education of children and in life, that it is better to develop the whole of your nature—looking upwards to a noble ideal, and allowing perhaps some ugly weeds to grow—than to repress the good with the bad. One often has felt in life that there are two courses open to one; an endeavour after nobler and purer living, *i.e.* an earnest attempt to silence and put down what is vile in you; or the alternative principle of fixing your eye steadfastly on all that is wise and noble, and developing with all your power your better self; not heeding the little slips, perhaps sometimes into very dirty places. I do not think that many have sufficient nervous power to do both; and Goethe tells you to choose freedom of development. In life you should seek a really congenial career, as a life-occupation, and then you should keep your heart and mind open to the outer world with various interests and activities.

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Until you have found this career you should wander up and down regarding no place as too low and dirty, no society too licentious and frivolous—perhaps in lowest society you may light on some human soul who will impart to you some vital truth. [MS. diary, December 14, 1878.]

The one thought that I have been pondering over is—Does my want of happiness come from my want of belief in the old faith which has helped so many thousands along this weary way? Or is it simply physical melancholy which attaches itself to my pet grievance, and which, if I had been without education and culture, would have attached itself to some passing trifle? And when one looks around and sees good Christians fussing and fretting about little holes in their purses, little disappointments to their vanity and their greed, one begins to think that each human being has his share of “distemper”—but perhaps the patient is on the whole happier who has it out in surface irritations than he who believes it to be a sign of an inward and incurable complaint, peculiar not only to himself alone but to the whole human race.

I cannot help having a half-conscious conviction that, if the human race is mortal, if its existence is without aim, if that existence is to end, at however remote a period, in a complete dissolution, like that which overcomes the individual, then life indeed is not worth living—not worth living to the mass of mankind. [MS. diary, March 30, 1879.]

I cannot write down what I felt on this Sunday morning—watching the silent Mass in St. Peter's. Perhaps there was a good deal of mere emotion in it—but it made me look back with regret on those days when I could pray, in all sincerity of spirit, to my Father in Heaven. I tried afterwards to work out in my mind the theory of the Roman Catholic faith as it might be accepted by the agnostic.

Human nature is a circumstance, with which we have to deal. It seems to be divided into two parts, the emotional and the intellectual. My intellectual or logical faculty drives me to the conclusion that, outside the knowledge of the relative or pheno-

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menal, I know nothing, except perhaps that there must be an absolute, a something which is unknowable. But whether the very fact that it is unknowable does not prevent me from considering it, or thinking about it, or contemplating it, is a question which Mr. Spencer's logic has not set at rest. My *reason* forces me to a purely negative conclusion; but I see very darkly before me, and feel that my logical faculty is very insufficient for the task I set it. Nor do I feel that its present decision is a final one. But I possess another faculty—the emotional—which is the dominant spirit in all my better and nobler moments. This spirit unceasingly insists that there is something above and around us which is worthy of absolute devotion and devout worship. Sometimes it presents this as the formula of "the great mystery"; and here it has attempted to join hands with my logical faculty, but this last persists that the unknowable has no qualities, and cannot be an object for feeling. Then it points to a great ideal, Plato's idea of the beautiful or perfect; but this idea, though it may be a subject for contemplation, cannot be an object of worship. Lastly, there is the great Father and Creator, the perfect object for devotion. He is the God of Christianity, not a far-off personality but united to man through His incarnation. This God is worshipped by Protestant and Catholic alike.

The Protestant, however, declares virtually the supremacy of his own reason. He asserts that his religion is rational and can be defended by arguments. It is true that, originally, he declared the infallibility of the Scriptures—but these, in their great variety, can be shown to assert many contradictory dogmas, and when once his individual mind is regarded as arbitrator as to how these contradictory statements are to be reconciled so that a whole may be constructed, he cannot rest until he has made some examination into the different claims of the various authors of the Scriptures to divine inspiration. This he finds was decided by men whose infallibility he would not dare to assert. During this process, whatever may have been his conclusions on particular points, the Bible has lost its infallibility. He has sat in judgement over it and acknowledged that his reason, his sense of logical truth, is his real guide, the guide whom he is morally obliged to follow. If he comes now



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into contact with modern science and modern philosophy, and is sincere in his search after truth, he must arrive ultimately at a more or less sceptical conclusion.

But the Catholic Church deals differently with the question. True, our nature is divided into the intellectual and emotional. True, also, that your intellectual or logical faculty will force you to certain conclusions. These conclusions, however, are utterly repugnant to your emotional nature; there is a want of harmony in your life—you would be free from the little vanities and vexations of daily life, from all your own little petty struggles for self and its glory; you would rest in the worship and adoration of some being who is perfect in wisdom and beauty—and in that worship you would strengthen that ideal within you, which should leaven your whole life. But your reason sternly refuses its sanction to that worship, and so long as you consider your individual mind as the only authority by which you can be guided, you must recognise the supremacy of your logical or reasoning faculty over your emotional or feeling faculty.

The Church offers you the restoration of that harmony without which your life is aimless and incomplete. She declares herself to be the supreme reason. She does not ask you to interpret her; she provides her own interpreter in the priest, and suits her doctrine to the individual and the time. You do not renounce the authority of reason, but that only of your individual reason; and this only on a question which it has already proved its incompetency to deal with to the satisfaction of the rest of your nature. So long as you took on yourself the responsibility of deciding what was true, you were morally obliged to abide by the conclusions you arrived at. But in joining the Catholic Church you refer the decision on religious questions to a great association which has been composed, through centuries, of men dedicating their life and thought to the theory and practice of the religious ideal.

Could not the agnostic, if he felt that his nature was not sufficiently developed to live without an emotional religion, could he not renounce his freedom to reason on that one subject, and submit to the authority of the great religious body on the subject of religion; just as he would accept that of the great scientific body on the subject of science, even if in the latter case

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his own reason should lead him to different conclusions, on any phenomena of nature, to those arrived at by scientific men?

Add to this the beautiful Catholic ritual, and the temptation to commit this intellectual (and perhaps moral) suicide is strong to one whose life without a religious faith is unbearable. [Rome: MS. diary, November 14, 1880.]

From another entry, given out of the order of date, I gather that the Roman Catholic was the only Christian Communion which at that time attracted me.

At their house I read *John Inglesant*—a most originally conceived book—with scenes and passages of great power. Especially interesting to me, as realising “sacramental” Christianity, the phase of Christianity for which I have the most sympathy; the author having evidently experienced that striving after inward purity of heart and mind, the continual cleansing and keeping pure of the whole man, as a temple “built unto God” and suited to this reception in the symbolical form of the supreme and divine sacrifice. Surely there are two ways of viewing the sacrifice of the Mass: one as an atonement to an exacting deity, the other as a grand symbolical expression of the greatest of human characteristics, the power of self-sacrifice in the individual for the good of the community.

If it were only possible for the priesthood to be pure, what an immense power the Roman Catholic Church would become! What a curious psychological fact is that great and mysterious joy in the prostration of soul and body before the symbol of infinite goodness uniting all individuals in one aspiration! [MS. diary, 1882.]

It is impossible for a woman to live in agnosticism. That is a creed which is only the product of one side of our nature, the purely rational, and ought we persistently to refuse authority to that other faculty which George Eliot calls the emotive thought? And this, when we allow this faculty to govern us in action; when we secretly recognise it as our guide in our highest moments. Again, what is the meaning of our longing for prayer, of our

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feeling happier and nobler for it? Why should we determine in our minds that the rational faculty should be regarded as the infallible head in our mental constitution? The history of the human mind, shown in the works of the greatest of the race, proves that what has been logically true to one age has been logically untrue to another; whereas we are all able to sympathise and enter into the almost inspired utterances of the emotive thought of philosophers and poets of old. Where is Plato now, in logic? His logic seems almost childish to us from its verbalism; and yet who can read the assertions of his faith without feeling humbled and awed, and willing almost to be his disciple? Is it not possible that *our* logic also is verbal, and that we are foolish to insist on the finality of its conclusions? But perhaps the real difficulty is that the emotional faculty, though it gives us a yearning, a longing for, perhaps even a distinct consciousness of, something above us, refuses to formulate and to systematise; and even forces us to see moral flaws in all the present religious systems. I suppose with most people it is the sense of what is *morally* untrue which first shakes your faith in Christianity; it is moral disapprobation of some of its dogmas which forces you to question rationally the rest. And this would be still more the case in an attempt to join the Catholic Church. You would be obliged to stifle your sense of what was right as well as that of what was true. [MS. diary, February 2, 1881.]

There is a good deal of interesting argument and demonstration in this chapter [that on "Necessary Truths" in George Henry Lewes's *History of Philosophy*], but I, alas! see nothing in it to convince me of the soundness of his view of the human being. It is the philosophy which my logical faculty has always dictated to the rest of my nature, and which the emotional part has always resented. Moreover, evolutionary and agnostic philosophy seems to me to be more the clearance away of false ideas than the presentation of a system of thought on which we can base our lives. It destroys all our present grounds for believing in immortality, in any being higher than humanity; but how dare we measure the great discoveries of the future, and limit the progress of human thought? There is little doubt that at present this philosophy darkens the life of man; and the

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greater his egotism the blacker appears to him the impersonality of the universe. Still, this very darkness may force us to keep the light of human sympathy burning clearly in our hearts; may oblige us to study and insist on the conditions for health of body and mind. [MS. diary, September 22, 1881.]

We all joined with Father in that beautiful communion service. [The Sunday after my mother's funeral.]

Now that I have experienced what the death of a dear one is, and have watched it and waited for it, a deep yearning arises for some religion by which to console grief and stimulate action. I have, if anything, less faith in the possibility of another life. As I looked at our mother dying I *felt* it was a final dissolution of body and soul—an end of that personality which we call the spirit. This was an instinctive conviction: on this great question we cannot reason. But, though my disbelief in what we call *immortality* was *strengthened*, a *new and wondrous faith* has arisen within me—a faith in goodness—in God. I must pray, I do pray and I feel better for it; and more able to put aside all compromise with worldliness and to devote myself with single-heartedness to my duty.

Surely the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ is the greatest symbol of the sacrifice we all ought to strive to make, by which we may gain a noble immortality. In this spirit I took the holy communion, for the first time for six years—years of more or less dreary materialism.

Rationally, I am still an agnostic, but I know not where my religious feeling, once awakened from the dreams of a vague idealism, and acknowledged as helpful in times of trial, sorrow and endeavour—where this religious feeling will lead me: whether I may not be forced to acknowledge its supremacy over my whole nature. [April 23, 1882.]

Mother's death opened out a new world to me in thought and action [I write a month later]. It stamped, by a new experience, the conviction which had been slowly growing from the first dawning of conscious thought within me, a conviction that the world was either an infernal chaos, or that all life was a manifestation of goodness; and death, disease and misery horrible only to our imperfect vision.

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The death of one dear and near to me did not strike me as sadder than the death of the thousands who vanish unknown around us. Either "the all" is so inexpressibly sad that there is no room for an increase of sadness through personal affliction; or else there is a mysterious meaning which, if we could divine it and accept it, would hallow all things, and give even to death and misery a holiness which would be akin to happiness. And the result of this ultimatum, presented by the thoughtful to the practical part of my nature, was a partial reversion to religion; I was satisfied that this would be the last word of thought unaided by experience gathered in action. The question remained, how am I to live and for what object? Is the chopped-up happiness of the world worth anything if the first alternative be true. Physical annihilation is impracticable. One's own life and one's own nature are facts with which one must deal; and with me they must be directed by some one consistent principle.

Even if the instinctive faith in a mysterious goodness is a fiction of the mind, would it not on the whole be happier to live by the light of this delusion, and blind oneself wilfully to the awful vision of unmeaning misery? Perhaps it would be difficult to direct a life on this negative basis. In truth one has a faith within one which persists in the absence of direct contradiction. [January 2, 1883.]

Thus the long-drawn-out controversy, between the Ego that affirms and the Ego that denies the validity of religious mysticism, ended, not in a reversion to the creed of Christianity, not even in an affirmation by the intellect of the existence of a spiritual power with whom man could enter into communion, but in an intuitive use of prayer as, for one of my temperament, essential to the right conduct of life. A secularist friend once cross-examined me as to what exactly I meant by prayer; he challenged me to define the process of prayer, to describe its happening. I answered that I would gladly do so if I could find the words. The trouble is, as Tagore observed about poetry, that words have meanings, or, as I should prefer to say, *predominantly*

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*intellectual meanings*; and that in prayer, even more than in poetry, it is emotion and not reason that seeks transmission. Religion is love; in no case is it logic. That is why, down all the ages of human development, prayer has been intimately associated, whether as a cause or as an effect, with the nobler and more enduring forms of architecture and music; associated, too, with poetry and painting, with the awe-inspiring aspects of nature, with the great emotional mysteries of maternity, mating and death. In another place I may try (and probably fail) to express, by the clumsy mechanism of the written word, the faith I hold; that it is by prayer, by communion with an all-pervading spiritual force, that the soul of man discovers the purpose or goal of human endeavour, as distinguished from the means or process by which human beings may attain their ends. For science is bankrupt in deciding the destiny of man; she lends herself indifferently to the destroyer and to the preserver of life, to the hater and to the lover of mankind. Yet any avoidance of the scientific method in disentangling "the order of things," any reliance on magic or on mystical intuition in selecting the process by which to reach the chosen end, spells superstition and usually results in disaster.

But this metaphysical resting-place was not reached until middle life. At this point in my narrative it suffices to record the fact that, during the ten years intervening between my mother's death (1882; æt. 24) and my father's death and my own marriage (1892; æt. 34)—crucial years during which I acquired the craft of a social investigator, experienced intense emotional strain, and persisted in continuous intellectual toil under adverse circumstances—it was the habit of prayer which enabled me to survive, and to emerge relatively sound in body and sane in mind.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE CHOICE OF A CRAFT [1882-1885; ÆT. 24-27]

ONE of the puzzle-questions about human nature in society is the relative significance, in determining the life-work of individual men, of nature and nurture, of innate tendency and social environment. It gratifies self-conceit to imagine "that every author hath his own Genius, directing him by a secret inspiration to that wherein he may most excel." But, as the expounder of this seventeenth-century saying reflects, this "inborn and, as it were, inspired element" was, in those days, assumed to belong to authors possessed of genius as distinguished from talent; authors "who were indebted to their natural endowments alone," and not to the study and imitation of other writers.<sup>1</sup> So far as I am

<sup>1</sup> *Words and Actions*, by Logan Pearsall Smith, 1925, p. 98. The distinction drawn in this delightful book (from which I take the quotation from Sir William Alexander's *Anacrisis*, 1634) is between authors who acquire their raw material by direct observation of and original reflection on nature, and authors who study and imitate other writers: a distinction akin to that between original work in art or in science, on the one hand, and book-learning on the other. The distinction made in the present chapter is slightly different: it is between minds that follow their natural bent or native gifts, and succeed or fail to impose themselves and their product on their contemporaries; and minds that, consciously or unconsciously, seek to satisfy an existing demand in the way of intellectual products; guided, to use a coarse expression, by "the smell of the market." It appears that I belonged to the latter category of instinctive caterers. The question to my mind was, not whether I liked or did not like the particular task, but whether the job needed doing and whether it was within my capacity. The alternative to doing such a job myself was to add to the function of caterer the function of

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concerned, the conclusion is obvious: in choosing the craft of a social investigator I proved, once for all, that I had no genius. For I had neither aptitude nor liking for much of the technique of sociology; some would say, for the vital parts of it. I had, for instance, no gifts for that rapid reading and judgement of original documents, which is indispensable to the historian; though by sheer persistency and long practice I acquired this faculty. And whilst I could plan out an admirable system of note-taking, the actual execution of the plan was, owing to an inveterate tendency to paraphrase extracts which I intended to copy, not to mention an irredeemably illegible handwriting, a wearisome irritation to me. As for the use of figures, whether mathematical or statistical, I might as well have attempted to turn water into wine! The only outcome of an agonising effort to master the rudiments of algebra, under the tuition of a local cleric who happened also to be a Cambridge wrangler, was that, for the first and last time in my life, I saw a ghost. It happened this wise. In the autumn after my mother's death (1882) my sister, Mary Playne, was staying with us in our Westmorland home. Out of sisterly affection, she became anxious lest my mania for study should interfere with the prospect of a happy and successful marriage. "Beatrice's intellect, or rather what she attempts to develop into an intellect," sister Georgie was reported to have said to sister Mary, "what's the good of it? It's no use to her or any one else—it's all done to make a show before old and young philosophers" (MS. diary, April 17, 1882). Spurred by some such vision of matrimonial futility (for what sensible woman wants a

*entrepreneur*, and to get some one else to accomplish that part of the work, which I found unpleasant or difficult. Hence the employment of research secretaries.



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philosopher for a husband ?), my sister Mary broke into my bedroom early one morning to find me sitting by an open window in an untidy dressing-gown, with dishevelled hair, and pale and spotty complexion, straining hand and brain to copy out and solve some elementary algebraical problems. "What nonsense this is," she began, half chaff, half compliment, "trying to be a blue-stocking when you are meant to be a pretty woman." "This is *my* room and *my* time—go away," I snapped at her. Immediately after breakfast, probably in order to assert my independence of domestic criticism, I resumed my mathematical strivings in the hours usually devoted to family talk. Towards the middle of the morning the door opened again, and my sister, silent and reproachful, seemed about to continue her remonstrance. "Leave the room ! " I shouted, at the ragged end of my temper. The door closed. And then it flashed into my consciousness that she was not in her usual tailor-made coat and skirt but in a white flannel wrap with dark blue spots, which I remembered her wearing when we were together in Germany. I shut my book and hurried downstairs. "Where is Mrs. Playne ? " I asked the butler. "She went out with Mr. Potter some time ago," he replied. For the next hour I sat in the hall, miserable with brain-fag, pretending to read the morning paper, but overcome with superstitious fear lest mishap had befallen her. In due course my sister reappeared; quite obviously in the flesh; glad to welcome my relaxed expression and affectionate greeting. Ashamed of my bad temper and unwilling to reopen the dispute, I did not reveal to her until many years afterwards the cause of my penitence.

Three weeks passed in mental contortions consequent on attempting mathematics without possessing mathematical

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faculty. Algebraical signs or numbers are to me half-believed-in facts which my mind persists in deeming fictions. I naturally refuse to believe that mathematics is the highest faculty of the brain; tho' perhaps a necessary tool in the application of the highest faculties to the most important subjects. [MS. diary November 4, 1882.]

"What you needed," observes The Other One, "was not a tutor but a partner." "But how could I select the partner until I had chosen the craft?" I ask.

In the following pages I seek to describe my reaction to the curiously compelling quality in the social environment in which I lived; whether this was manifested in the books that I read, in the persons with whom I associated, or in the domestic, social and political events that formed the framework of my life. Granted intellectual curiosity, and an overpowering impulse towards self-expression, it now seems to me that, whatever had been my inborn gifts and defects, the weight of circumstance would have compelled me to investigate the history and working of social institutions.

To win recognition as an intellectual worker was, even before my mother's death, my secret ambition. I longed to write a book that would be read; but I had no notion about what I wanted to write. From my diary entries I infer that, if I had followed my taste and my temperament (I will not say my talent), I should have become, not a worker in the field of sociology, but a descriptive psychologist; either in the novel, to which I was from time to time tempted; or (if I had been born thirty years later) in a scientific analysis of the mental make-up of individual men and women, and their behaviour under particular conditions. For there begin to appear in my diary, from 1882 onwards, realistic scenes from country and town life,

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descriptions of manners and morals, analytic portraits of relations and friends—written, not with any view to self-education, as were my abstracts, extracts and reviews, but merely because I enjoyed writing them. It is, however, significant that these sketches from life nearly always concern the relation of the individual to some particular social organisation: to big enterprise, or to Parliament, to the profession of law, or of medicine or of the Church. As a sample, I give two entries descriptive of the lower ranges of human nature in the Church of England in mid-Victorian times.

Talk at table d'hôte across the table to three young men, common, commoner, commonest—tho' perhaps more common-place than common [I note during a tour with my father and little sister to Switzerland in the summer of 1882]. Find the next morning that Father has arranged (while we have been lying lazily in bed) that we two should spend the whole day with Common and Commoner on the other glacier. "At any rate it will be a study of human nature, Rosebud," say I. And really on that dreary ice, half the time enveloped in mist and rain, Common and Commoner were not amiss. The latter, a regular wild young Irishman, with harum-scarum intelligence, fell to my lot. Like his two companions, he was a pillar of the Church! I was soon in his confidence. His language was so characteristic of the man, that I scribble it down.

"I was a year and a half in Germany at school—terrible place for work—the master an awful fellare for false doctrine, about eternity of punishment and that sort of thing. . . . But a fellare only wants to have those things explained to him by a clever man. I got it all out of my head when I came to England. Nevare meant to take orders—but was always a terrible one for brain work—it just knocks me down. I'm nevare jolly in a place for more than three months. My only brothare, he spends his life in scenting trouble—wherevare there's war, he's there—got an awful keen scent for it. Last time we heard of him, was one of the mounted constabulary in Australia, just on the track of the natives: that sort of thing is in the family."

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"How did you manage to pass your examination?" I venture to ask.

"Oh I'm one of those lucky fellares—get through without reading, manage on lectines, can put a little stuff in a deal of pallavar—the examiners they much prefer being told what they've said than what you find in books."

"And your sermons?"

"Oh, I was well coached in them by Canon Fleming. I'd to preach before him—didn't I shake!"

"I suppose you don't go in for doctrine?"

"Oh yes! a fellare must hang it on to something—I like similes, plenty of similes, they go down; but near Hereford, where I live, is an awful dull place. Vicar, regular driver for work. Really it was awful hard on a young fellare—four days after I got there, he and his family left—I'd the whole work, four-and-twenty young fellares to prepare for Confirmation. And they're a dull lot there, it is hard to drive stuff into their heads. Really, if I hadn't my garden and my fowls, I don't know what I should do. As for the society, it's made up of parsons—I hate them—they get hold of a young fellare, and preach to him, and tell him what to do and what to think, until a young fellare doesn't know where he is. The vicar and his family are awfully kind to me—five daughters—whole family deaf—have to preach into a trough with speaking-trumpets into the vicar's face! He's a wonderful man for politics, get all my politics from him.—Awful old Tory—gives his congregation regular political speeches as sermons. Began the other day, after blowing his nose and clearing his throat, which always takes him a deal of time, 'I can congratulate you most heartily, my brethren—that that blaguard Bradlaugh has been expelled the floor of the House!' Country doctor, awful little cad—wanted me to be always in his house, but really couldn't stand him. Had to make him understand that—but I had some awful shindies about him in the parish."

"What sort of rows?" ask I, my curiosity aroused, "are you not on speaking terms with him?"

"Oh yes! when I meet him, I bow and palaver—wouldn't do if I didn't."

Short pause, as we clamber up a very steep place.

"Do you like your profession?"

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"Well, what I should have liked would have been to go to sea, but it was too late, and my brain was too weak for office work, my father was a clergyman and I've five uncles in the Church—I know a lot of young curates, some take to flowers, some to bicycling, some have fowls. Some have told me that they are awfully flabbergasted at a death-bed—don't know what to say—that's the thing that makes a young fellow serious," said the young Irishman, with a passing expression of sadness. "It is seeing sickness and death. . . ."

Just as I was meditating bed, father came up, with Mrs. R., wife of the rector of T. This lady was a comely, clerical-looking dame, with decided aquiline features, pallid face, large cold grey eyes, which, together with the mouth, were slightly turned down at the corners, giving an air of piety; cap and dress of solid respectability, and general look of satisfaction with this world, and firm conviction as to her place in the next.

"It is such a pity we did not make your acquaintance before," she was kind enough to remark, with a drawling emphasis on particular syllables. "There are such a *queer* set of people here. Last night I was talking to one of the nicest-looking men here, really quite a presentable man, and what do you think he turned out to be?" "No! what?" "A *dissenting* minister! Of course I had to stop my conversation; those dissenters have such queer notions and are so touchy about their social position, and of course as a churchwoman, as the wife of a clergyman of the established church, I could not talk to him, without probably offending him." "Of course not," say I, tho' inwardly wondering why offence need be given. "Then this morning I sat down on a bench near quite a *ladylike*-looking girl; where do you think she came from?" "No! where?" "From *Birmingham*." "Dear me," ejaculate I sympathetically. At this point we seated ourselves and began to reconnoitre as to our acquaintance with the Gloucestershire Vale families. "I know Mr. P.<sup>1</sup>—intimately—*delightful* man—the Miss P.-s, four very accomplished girls—it is a pity they are *still* the Miss P.-s." Here indeed was a bond of union; who does not enjoy gentle disparagement of their next-door neighbour, especially when

<sup>1</sup> For obvious reasons, names are frequently omitted in the entries in this and following chapters.

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that neighbour happens to be a "leetle" above them in social position? Warmed by this we ascended to the subject of education. "It is very sad, near us," continued the rector's wife; "the whole education of the daughters of the tradespeople, of the solicitors and of *that* class of persons, is in the hands of dissenters—where of course they get no *sound* religious training. My husband is trying to start a Church middle-class school, which will be *entirely* under him—we have secured two *excellent* Churchwomen as mistresses. A lady, who has great experience of these High Schools, which seem to me *most* objectionable, told me that the girls were so pressed with work, that they had not time for their daily prayers; and that the education was so *high*, that they frequently procured for themselves books on modern thought. And it seems, that in many of these High Schools, all classes are educated together—the teaching is thought *so* good that many parents of good position (tho' of course of limited means) are induced to send their daughters there, and it is quite *impossible* for them to tell next whom their daughters may be sitting!" . . . [MS. diary, June 1882.]

The death of my mother revolutionised my life. From being a subordinate, carrying out directions, and having to fit into the framework of family circumstance, studies and travels, friendships and flirtations, I became a principal, a person in authority, determining not only my own but other people's conduct; the head of a large household perpetually on the move; the home, wherever located, serving as the meeting-place of seven married sisters and their growing families; a busy hostess in town and country, entertaining my father's, my own and my sisters' friends. More significant than any of these routine activities was the fact that I was my father's counsellor and my youngest sister's virtual guardian. This position of responsibility and authority was accentuated by my father's temperament; if he had any defect as a parent it was an over-indulgent disposition, an over-appreciation of the character and

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intelligence of those whom he loved and those with whom he lived. And though I was not one of the daughters who attracted his more romantic sentiments, I was certainly one in whose judgement and business shrewdness he had complete confidence; a confidence due partly to my having acted, off and on, as his private secretary and confidential attendant; memorising for him the various details of the unwritten "understandings" between men of affairs which form so large a part of the machinery of big business. I note, in passing, that apprehending, recollecting, and afterwards recording complicated series of facts, gathered in conversation, is part of the technique of a social investigator; and I owe the skill I had as an interviewer to this preliminary practice with my father. When I became the head of his household, he left it to me to settle the why, the when and the wherefore of the expenditure of a considerable income; indeed, he had more than once suggested that if I "did not want to marry" I might become his recognised associate in business. Thus, for two or three years, I experienced that unrestricted and unregulated use of money which the *rentiers* term personal freedom, and the wage-earners, who feel that they produce the commodities and services consumed by men and women of leisure, regard as personal power. Moreover, coincident with this increased freedom or power, perhaps arising out of it, was a bound upward in physical and mental vigour. From being an anæmic girl, always paying for spells of dissipation or study, by periods of nervous exhaustion, often of positive illness, I became an exceptionally energetic woman, carrying on, persistently and methodically, several separate, and, in some ways, conflicting, phases of life—undergoing, in fact, much of the strain and stress of a multiple personality.

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Driving through the streets of London on my way from Paddington [I recall in a summary of the year's work], I had that curious "sensation" of power, which I suppose comes to most people who have lived within themselves, who have seldom had their self-estimation righted by competition with others. Every face in the crowded streets seemed ready to tell me its secret history if only I would watch closely enough. Again, that vain hope for a "bird's-eye view" of mankind floated before my eyes; a grasping after some spectral idea which vanished as I tried to describe its outline. My energy and my power for work were suddenly increased. I remained in a state of exaltation all the summer, possibly to some extent due to the physical effect of the high air at Mürren. (General abundance of blood is a cause of emotional exaltation! H. S.) The state of "exaltation," whether moral or intellectual, must be the same, in its inherent nature, in the genius and in the ordinary person; but it is vastly different in its result. It is a spiritual isolation of yourself; a questioning of your capability of doing useful work outside the duty incumbent on an ordinary individual of the special class to which you belong.

The penalty attached to a wrong answer is greater if it err on the side of vanity. There is the probability of ridicule, and what is worse infinitely, the certainty of comparative uselessness. Cynicism, too, helps humility to conquer in this crisis. It is so very doubtful whether works (either of thought or of action) of the moderately gifted man have any permanent effect. If he is representative, he is a mere instrument, and many as good ones lie to hand. If he resist the stream, he is powerless to divert the fearful current of human tendency. My little dream was broken by the friendly shake of kindly persons who caught me napping and neglecting work in which they were interested. Mathematics, too, effectually sobered me. It is a good foot-measure of ability which can be used in private. On the whole, the new year begins with a determination to devote myself first of all to practical life; if there is energy to spare, "surely I can do what I like with mine own!"

It would be amusing to make studies of human beings, with the same care I bestowed on imitating bits of rock, stick and root. The six months spent on drawing, though wasted as far as



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accomplishment goes, certainly increased sensitiveness to colour and form. I remember, that winter, what keen delight the curve of a tree branch, the gradation of colour in a carrot or turnip, gave me. The vilest things in Nature had an interest and even a beauty of their own. And, since my life will be much spent in society, an attempt to describe the men and women I meet will add interest to it, and give me a more delicate appreciation of their characteristics.

In most of us there is a desire to express our thoughts, feelings or impressions. Women generally choose music or drawing, but there is really no more pretension in writing, so long as one does not humbug oneself as to the value of the stuff written. And there is this advantage, that language is the ordinary medium for influence in practical life; and that, even if we ignore the great advantage of writing in its development of thought, clearness and plausibility of expression are good allied to the more important qualities of character and mind. Morley says we moderns limit our ideas of redeeming the time to the two pursuits of reading books and making money; and, roughly speaking, the number of books read and digested during this past year is equivalent in one's own estimation to work done!

It is a difficult question whether the present "intellectualism" is overestimated in its good effects. Just at present, I fancy there is a reaction against the idea that intellectual education is the cure for all evils. Certainly, the persons who are universally interested and universally useless make up rather a dreary society. Does culture increase power to act? I am inclined to think it increases the power but decreases the desire? [MS. diary, January 3, 1883.]

The first point to be settled was how to reconcile the rival pulls on time and energy, on the one hand, of family affection, backed up by the Victorian code of feminine domesticity; and, on the other, of a domineering curiosity into the nature of things, reinforced by an awakening desire for creative thought and literary expression. Some claims were beyond doubt. To be my father's companion in business and travel was not merely a continuous delight

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but also a liberal education. Personal sympathy as well as a sense of duty was roused by my little sister's chronic ill-health. But there were other assumptions with regard to the whole duty of woman that I refused to accept. According to the current code, the entire time and energy of an unmarried daughter—especially if she was the responsible mistress of the home—were assumed to be spent, either in serving the family group, or in entertaining and being entertained by the social circle to which she belonged. There was, it is true, a recognised counter-claim, the right to end this apprenticeship by accomplishing her masterpiece, making a "good marriage," by which she would graduate into the goodly company of prosperous matrons, thus adding to the corporate influence of the family. A code implies a court to interpret it. In my case, the solid phalanx of seven married sisters, with the seven brothers-in-law in reserve as assessors, proved to be, I gladly admit it, a tolerant and kindly jury of enquiry and presentment. But, like other potential law-breakers, I was determined to evade, or at any rate to limit, the court's jurisdiction. In so far as the health and happiness of father and sister were concerned, or the disposal of the family income, I fully recognised the right of the family jury to intervene. But I silently withdrew all my own aspirations and plans for self-culture and self-expression from family discussion—a reserve which entailed isolation and loneliness.

Alongside of this inward conflict is a recognition that (probably owing to this egotism) I am losing ground in the affections of my sisters. Of course there will be unavoidable criticism, and some of it will be unjustified. It is no use being oversensitive—but if one wishes to feel philosophically towards it, one must be honestly convinced of the rightness and thoroughness of one's own intentions. [MS. diary, December 1882.]

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The rival claims on time and energy were rapidly adjusted by the habit of getting through my intellectual work in my own room between five and eight in the morning, leaving the rest of the day for domestic cares and social duties.

Reading H. S.'s *Psychology* diligently every morning. These quiet three hours of study are the happiest ones in the day. Only one trouble continually arises—the stimulus a congenial study gives to my ambition, which is continually mortified by a gleam of self-knowledge; meeting with the most ordinarily clever person forces me to appreciate my own inferiority. And yet, fool that I am, I can't help feeling that could I only devote myself to one subject I could do something. However, I suppose that the most commonplace person every now and again catches sight of possibilities in his nature which, from lack of other qualities, are doomed to remain undeveloped. And why should we strain every nerve to know, when every fresh atom of knowledge increases the surface exposed to the irritating action of the unknown? What good does it do to ourselves or others, even if we increase (which is an impossibility for the ordinary mortal) the sum total of human knowledge? Character is much more in need of development than intelligence, which in these latter days has taken the bit between its teeth and run away with human energy. Perhaps thought, with the philosophy it breeds, *does* influence moral development, by raising our minds above the consideration of personal mortification and personal gratification; by enlarging our sympathies and by opening a safety valve to our mental activity through which it can escape harmlessly. After all, one sees more mischief done by unoccupied but active minds than duties omitted by minds interested in other things besides their own concerns. What distresses me about my own little work is the small amount of material I have to work upon—the trivial subjectiveness of my thought. That is what I am painfully conscious of when I meet really clever men. My work, if it can be dignified by that name, is so amateurish; and yet I don't know that I have a right to pretend to anything better and more businesslike. All my duties lie in the practical direction. Why should I, wretched little frog, try and puff myself into a

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professional? If I could rid myself of that mischievous desire to achieve, I could defend the few hours I devote to study, by the truly satisfactory effect it has on my physical nature. It does keep me in health—whether through its direct influence on my circulation or through the indirect effect of a certain self-satisfaction it induces. Dissipation doesn't suit me, morally or physically; and I don't see why I shouldn't be true to my own nature and resist it. [MS. diary, January 1883.]

The following entries in my diary, during the first year of my newly found position of an independent hostess in London society, reveal the strain and stress of this internal struggle between the desire for self-development and self-expression and the more conventional calls of family duty, reinforced by the promptings of personal vanity and social ambition.

Shall I give myself up to society [I ask the day before we take possession of our London house] and make it my aim to succeed therein; or shall I only do so as far as duty calls me, keeping my private life much as it has been for the last nine months? On the whole the balance is in favour of society. It is going with the stream, and pleasing my people. It is doing a thing thoroughly that I must do partially. It is taking opportunities instead of making them. It is risking less, and walking on a well-beaten track in pleasant company. The destination is not far distant; no unusual amount of power is wanted to arrive there; and lastly, and perhaps this is the reason which weighs most with me, there is less presumption in the choice.

Therefore, I solemnly dedicate my energies for the next five months to the cultivation of the social instincts—trusting that the good dæmon within me will keep me from all vulgarity of mind, insincerity and falseness. I would like to go amongst men and women with a determination to know them; to humbly observe and consider their characteristics; always remembering how much there is in the most inferior individual which is outside and beyond one's understanding. Every fresh intimacy strengthens the conviction of one's own powerlessness to com-

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prehend fully any other nature, even when one watches it with love. And without sympathy there is an impassable barrier to the real knowledge of the inner workings which guide the outer actions of human beings. Sympathy, or rather *accepted* sympathy, is the only instrument for the dissection of character. All great knowers and describers of human nature must have possessed this instrument. The perfection of the instrument depends no doubt on a purely intellectual quality, analytical imagination—this, again, originating in subjective complexity of motive and thought. But unless this latter quality is possessed to an extraordinary degree, insight into other natures is impossible, unless we subordinate our interest in self and its workings to a greater desire to understand others. Therefore the resolution which has been growing in my mind is, that I will fight against my natural love of impressing others, and prepare my mind to receive impressions. And as fast as I receive impressions I will formulate them, thereby avoiding the general haziness of outline which follows a period of receptivity without an attempt of expression. [MS. diary, February 22, 1883.]

A pleasant bedroom in front of the house and looking towards the west [I write when we are settled in Prince's Gate for the London season]. In the afternoon I can sit here and watch the sun slowly setting behind the Museum buildings and gardens . . . undisturbed by the rushing life of the great city; only the brisk trottings and even rollings of the well-fed horses and well-cushioned carriages. Altogether, we are in the land of luxury; we are living in an atmosphere of ease, satiety and boredom, with prospect and retrospect of gratified and mortified vanity. Father has found occupation in enquiring into, and to some extent organising, a large railway amalgamation scheme: the promoters anxious to get his time, and still more his name. Secretary Price called this afternoon. Cleverly managed to insinuate the "we" into it. Father really anxious for work. Still suffers silent agony and lonely grief for mother; his sorrow is permanent though intermittent. There is a deep sadness in decaying power, more terrible to me than death itself. And all who have passed the prime of life, who have lived those few golden years for work, must exhibit this decline in the power for *persistent* work. I do not wonder that men should turn from

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human nature to study, with absorbing interest, life in the lower forms. There is so much that is terrible and awful in mental organisation, lit up as it is by one's own self-consciousness, and surrounded by that dark background of annihilation. Constantly, as I walk in one of the crowded streets of London, and watch the faces of the men and women who push past me, lined, furrowed, and sometimes contorted by work, struggle and passion, and think that all this desire and pain, this manifold feeling and thought are but a condition of force and matter, phantom-like forms built up to be destroyed, a hopelessness overtakes me, paralysing all power of wishing and doing. Then I sink into inertia, relieved only by a languid curiosity as to the variations in structure and function of those individuals who will let me observe them and enquire of them. Cold-blooded enquiry takes the place of heartfelt sympathy. But this one should shake off sternly. . . . [MS. diary, February 1883.]

Huge party at the Speaker's—one or two of such would last one a lifetime. Find it so difficult to be the universally pleasant. Can't think what to say. Prefer on the whole the crowd in Oxford Street, certainly the feminine part of it. "Ladies" are so expressionless. Should fancy mental superiority of men greatest in our class. Could it be otherwise with the daily life of women in society? What is there in the life which is so attractive? How can intelligent women wish to marry into the set where this is the social régime? [MS. diary, March 1, 1883.]

Made calls. Lady P., great heiress of common extraction, married baronet: this last a bland individual whose abilities have been swamped in money. Large house in Prince's Gate, magnificently equipped with "rareties" in china and furniture resulting in general sombre and heavy look. She, a small, pretty, delicate-featured woman, with *maladive* expression and certain seedy stylishness of appearance and manner. Sitting next her a stout plain woman gorgeously got up. Interrupted them in conversation on servants. After first civilities:

Lady P. "I was telling Mrs. B. that the last cook who applied to me asked £250 per year, perquisites and freedom to buy his own materials, and his Sundays to himself. Very kind and

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condescending, was it not?—and he was actually an old servant of ours, who had left us only two years; but really the presumption and dishonesty of servants nowadays is preposterous. I found out only the other day that my cook was disposing of £14 worth of butter per week."

"Good gracious," I exclaimed, "how very disgraceful!"

Lady P. "But it is quite impossible to check it; one's whole household is in the pay of the tradesmen who supply it. How *can* one check it?"

Mrs. B. "The worst is that whatever you pay, for *that* after all one *does* not mind, you cannot get what you want. Now *do* you think it a right thing for the butler to be out every evening, and not only the butler but the first footman, and leave only the boy of the establishment to bring up coffee?"

Lady P. "The day after that happened both of them would go. But then, as you said, there is the difficulty of masters. Only yesterday Lady Wolseley was calling here and was complaining of Sir Garnet—I mean Lord Wolseley.—She had actually rung the bell and told Lord Wolseley exactly what to say to the man about his abominable behaviour; she left the room, and as she went upstairs she heard Lord Wolseley tell the man to put some coals on the fire!"

Mrs. B. "Really!" (Short pause while she is thinking whether she could possibly bring in the Spanish Ambassador who called on her some months ago, which she afterwards succeeded in doing.) "I see you have got that chest from Christie's last sale; my husband said there was little better than rubbish there, of course *that* excepted. . . ." And so on. . . . [MS. diary, March 11, 1883.]

Now my life is divided sharply into the thoughtful part and the active part [I note a month later], completely unconnected one with the other. They are, in fact, an attempt to realise the different and almost conflicting ideals, necessitating a compromise as to energy and time which has to be perpetually readjusted. My only hope is that the ideal one is hidden from the world, the truth being, that in my heart of hearts I'm ashamed of it and yet it is actually the dominant internal power. Fortunately for me, all external forces support the other motive, so perhaps the balance is a pretty just one. But it is a curious experience

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moving about among men and women, talking much, as you are obliged to do, and never mentioning those thoughts and problems which are your *real life*, and which absorb, in their pursuit and solution, all the earnestness of your nature. This doubleness of motive, still more this dissemblance towards the world you live in, extending even to your own family, must bring with it a feeling of unreality; worse, a loss of energy in the sudden transitions from the one life to the other. Happily, one thing is clear to me—the state of doubtfulness will not be of long duration; and the work that is done during that state will not be useless to me whichever vocation my nature and my circumstances eventually force me into. I shall surely some day have the veil withdrawn and be allowed to gaze unblinded on the narrow limits of my own possibilities. [MS. diary, April 24, 1883.]

How comic this is, all this excitement about nothing. After a dinner when I have talked, I am absolutely useless in the way of brain-work. Francis Galton in his *Enquiry into Human Faculty* speaks of the mind “rumbling over its old stories,” but in the society life one leads in London one’s little brain is for the most part engaged in chattering over its newest impressions. Conversation becomes a mania and a most demoralising one. Even when alone, it is continued in a sort of undertone; and the men and women one has met strut about on the ghostly stage, monopolising, in their dematerialised form, the little time and energy left. I suppose persons with real capacity can take society as relaxation, without becoming absorbed by it; but then, if it is to be relaxation, one must not have much to do with all that elaborate machinery which moves it. As it is, what between arrangements (which seem endless) and the strangeness of this disconnected companionship with many different minds, all superior in strength and experience to my own, the little mind I ever had is out of joint and useless. When I am not organising I am either talking with my tongue, or a lively conversation is going on within the “precinct” of my brain. Reading and meditating are equally impossible. A train of thought is an unknown experience. A series of pictures, in which the human beings represented have the capacity of speech and gesture, succeed one another. The mind seems for the time to lose its personality, to be transformed into a mirror



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reflecting men and women with their various surroundings; one's own little ego walking in and out amongst them. . . . Certainly "society" has carried the day—my own pursuits have gone pretty well to the dogs. . . . One gets precious little by talking [I reflect after another dinner party], let it be hoped that one gives amusement. . . . If only one could get some one nature and examine it thoroughly. Except those of one's own family, observation of different individuals is so hopelessly piecemeal; and is so interfered with by a consciousness of one's own personality; by the continual attempt to make use of the people one meets as self-reflectors. [MS. diary, May 5, 1883.]

Interesting dinner here on the 18th. A Whig Peer on one side of me—Joseph Chamberlain on the other. Whig Peer talked of his own possessions; Chamberlain passionately of getting hold of other people's—for the masses! Curious and interesting character, dominated by intellectual passions, with little self-control but with any amount of purpose. Herbert Spencer on Chamberlain: "A man who may mean well, but who does, and will do, an incalculable amount of mischief." Chamberlain on Herbert Spencer: "Happily, for the majority of the world, his writing is unintelligible, otherwise his life would have been spent in doing harm." No personal animus between them, but a fundamental antipathy of mind. In what does this originate? I understand the working of Herbert Spencer's reason; but I do not understand the reason of Chamberlain's passion. But the motive force which moves the man of action is seldom rational. Philosophers will influence but never rule the world, at any rate not until the human nature of the masses is fundamentally altered; and then I imagine the philosopher will have advanced into a still calmer sphere. . . . [MS. diary, June 1883.]

The following entries, six months later, giving my impression of Mr. Chamberlain when he was the leader of the Radicals, may interest some readers:

He told me the history of his political career; how his creed grew up on a basis of experience and sympathy; how his desire

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to benefit the many had become gradually a passion absorbing within itself his whole nature. "Hitherto, the well-to-do have governed this country for their own interest; and I will do them this credit—they have achieved their object. Now I trust the time is approaching for those who work and have not. My aim in life is to make life pleasanter for the great majority; I do not care if it becomes in the process less pleasant for the well-to-do minority. Take America, for instance. Cultured persons complain that the society there is vulgar; less agreeable to the delicate tastes of delicately trained minds. But it is infinitely preferable to the ordinary worker. . . ."

The political creed is the whole man—the outcome of his peculiar physical and mental temperament. He is neither a reasoner, nor an observer in the scientific sense. He does not deduce his opinions by the aid of certain well-thought-out principles, from certain carefully ascertained facts. He aims, rather, at being the organ to express the *desires*—or what he considers the desires—of the majority of his countrymen. His power rests on his intuitive knowledge of the wishes of a certain class of his countrymen; on his faculty of formulating the same, and of reimpressing them forcibly on a mass of indifferent-minded men, who, because these desires are co-extensive with their real or apparent interests, have these desires latent in them. Whether these desires are normal, and the gratification of them consistent with the health and well-being of the English body politic, is a question upon which I certainly do not presume to have an opinion. Chamberlain is an organ of great individual force; the extent of his influence will depend on the relative power of the class he is adapted to represent.

By temperament he is an enthusiast and a despot. A deep sympathy with the misery and incompleteness of most men's lives, and an earnest desire to right this, transform political action into a religious crusade; but running alongside this genuine enthusiasm is a passionate desire to crush opposition to his will, a longing to feel his foot on the necks of others, though he would persuade himself that he represents the right and his adversaries the wrong. [MS. diary, January 12, 1884.]

And here is a description of a political demonstration at

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Birmingham a few weeks after the date of the foregoing entry:

Below us, packed as close as may be, stand some thousands of men. Strong barriers divide the hall into sections, and, as a newcomer pushed in or a faint-hearted one attempts to retire, the whole section sways to and fro. Cheers rise out of the general hum as a favourite member of the "nine hundred" seats himself; and friendly voices from the crowd greet the M.P.'s from neighbouring constituencies, or delegates from other caucuses, as they take their places on the platform.

The band strikes up, and the three members for Birmingham enter. John Bright is received with affectionate and loyal applause, as he stands for a moment before the children and the children's children of his old friends and contemporaries. Muntz, a feeble-looking elderly gentleman, with rabbit-like countenance and shambling gait, forms an interval between Bright and Chamberlain; and, in his weak mediocrity, looks comically out of place—a materialised vacuum—between these two strong embodiments of humanity. Chamberlain, the master and the darling of his town, is received with deafening shouts. The Birmingham citizen (unless he belongs to the despised minority) adores "our Joe"; for has he not raised Birmingham to the proud position of one of the great political centres of the universe?

I was disappointed in Bright as an orator. Still, there was something nobly pathetic in the old old story of Tory sinfulness told by the stern-looking old man, who seemed gradually to lose consciousness of the crowd beneath him, and see himself confronted with the forces of the past. The people listened with reverence and interest, and as one looked down upon them, and one's eye wandered from face to face, this mass of human beings, now under the influence of one mind, seemed to be animated by one soul. Perhaps the intoxicating effect of the people's sympathy is due to the great fact of the one in the many.

While Philip Muntz meandered through political common-places, and defended himself from charges of lukewarmness and want of loyalty to the Radical programme, the crowd once more became a concourse of disconnected individuals. The subtle bond was broken which had bound man to man and

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fused all into one substance worked upon by an outside force. Laughter and loud-toned chaff passed from neighbour to neighbour.

Conflicting cries of "Speak up, Philip," "Make way for a better man," "We'll hear you," and hissed-down attempts to clap him into a speedy end, showed the varying tempers of the mixed multitude. As the time advanced, the backward portion became more and more unruly, whilst the eyes of those in front gradually concentrated themselves on the face of the next speaker. He seemed lost in intent thought. You could watch in his expression some form of feeling working itself into the mastery of his mind. Was that feeling spontaneous or intentioned? Was it created by an intense desire to dominate, to impress his own personality and his own aim on that pliable material beneath him; or did it arise from the consciousness of helpful power, from genuine sympathy with the wants and cravings of the great mass who trusted him?

As he rose slowly, and stood silently before his people, his whole face and form seemed transformed. The crowd became wild with enthusiasm. Hats, handkerchiefs, even coats, were waved frantically as an outlet for feeling. The few hundreds of privileged individuals seated in the balcony rose to their feet. There was one loud uproar of applause and, in the intervals between each fresh outburst, one could distinguish the cheers of the crowd outside, sending its tribute of sympathy. Perfectly still stood the people's Tribune, till the people, exhausted and expectant, gradually subsided into fitful and murmuring cries. At the first sound of his voice they became as one man. Into the tones of his voice he threw the warmth of feeling which was lacking in his words; and every thought, every feeling, the slightest intonation of irony or contempt was reflected on the face of the crowd. It might have been a woman listening to the words of her lover! Perfect response, and unquestioning receptivity. Who reasons with his mistress? The wise man asserts his will, urges it with warmth or bitterness, and flavours it with flattery and occasional appeals to moral sentiments. No wonder that the modern politician turns with disgust from the cantankerous debates of an educated "House" to the undisputing sympathy of an uneducated and like-thinking crowd. Not extraordinary

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that the man of passionate conviction, or of the will which simulates it and clothes it in finely worded general principles, who ignores all complexity in things, should become the ruling spirit, when the ultimate appeal, the moving force, rests with the masses whose desires are prompted by passion and unqualified by thought.

That evening at supper were entertained some twenty of the caucus. The Chief sat silent in a state of suppressed exaltation; acutely sensitive to sympathy or indifference, even from an outsider. His faithful followers talked amongst themselves on local matters—questions of party strategy and discipline—and looked at him from time to time with respectful admiration.

The man's power as a leader and controller of men is proved by his position in his own town. As far as one could judge from watching the large parties of adherents who humbly ate and drank at the great man's table, morning, noon and night, and from listening attentively to their conversation with each other and with him, his authority over the organisation he has created is absolute. He recognises no distinction of class, and in this, as in all other matters, he is supported by the powerful clan to which he belongs. The Kenricks and Chamberlains form the aristocracy and plutocracy of Birmingham. They stand far above the town society in social position, wealth and culture; and yet they spend their lives, as great citizens, taking an active and leading part in the municipal, political and educational life of their town. There is one eternal refrain in a Chamberlain-Kenrick household: Birmingham society is superior in earnestness, sincerity and natural intelligence, to any society in the United Kingdom! Apparently, the conviction remains unshaken by wider social experience, for the Cabinet Minister and his women-kind repeat with warmth the same assertion in the London drawing-room. Certainly, as far as my own experience went of the family and its immediate surroundings, earnestness and simplicity of motive were strikingly present.

The devotion of his electors no doubt springs partly from their consciousness of his genuine loyalty and affection for them. But the submission of the whole town to his autocratic rule arises from his power of dealing with different types of men; of enforcing submission by high-handed arbitrariness, attracting

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devotion by the mesmeric quality of his passion, and manipulating the remainder through clever presentation of their interests and consideration for their petty weaknesses.

In his treatment of some members of the Association (I noticed this particularly in his attitude towards Schnadhorst) he used the simple power of "You shall, and you go to the devil if you don't." The second power—that of attraction—is shown to a certain extent in private intercourse with his intimate friends, but chiefly in his public relationship towards his own constituency; and it is proved by the emotional nature of their enthusiasm. It is to this power that Chamberlain owes all the happiness of his life, and it is the reaction of this power which intensifies his sympathies and also his egotism. Whether it will develop so as to assume a form which will extend beyond the immediate influence of his personality is one of the questions which will decide his future greatness. At present he fails to express it in his written words, except in the bitterness of his hatred and contempt, which is but one side of his passion.

His diplomatic talent is unquestioned, and is shown in his administration of public and local affairs and in his Parliamentary work. [MS. diary, February 1884.]

In this whirl of town society life [I sum up towards the end of the season of 1883] the superficial part of my small intellect and the animal part of my nature are alike stimulated. My aim in life, the motives which have moved me in the best times of the past are blurred and misty. All now is uncertain. I wander hither and thither in search after gratification, gradually exhausting the credit account of "good motive"; the small experience I pick up being saturated by an ever-increasing perplexity at the queerness of things. Possibly, in our mental life, when we are not forced into a groove of activity, we have periods of effort and periods of receptivity, during which latter state we collect the materials we afterwards form into action; into a governing motive. Anyhow, though, on the whole, life in this phase is pleasurable, there still remains lurking in the depths of one's nature a profound discontent; a doubt as to the usefulness of this careless noting of things, and a contempt for one's own nature in its enjoyment of these petty gratifications, and a some-

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what unpleasant surprise at the presence of feelings hitherto ignored or quietly passed over as transient and unimportant. [MS. diary, June 3, 1883.]

This is the last word in my diary about what used to be called, in the reign of Queen Victoria, "Society," with a big S. The picture stored in my memory of that unpleasing social entity, a state of mind and form of activity, on the part of the upper ten thousand, which, I am told by those who ought to know, was finally killed by the Great War, has been set forth in the first chapter of this book. Here I recall that the special characteristic which most distressed me, during the two years I acted as hostess in my father's London and country homes, was the cynical effrontery with which that particular crowd courted those who possessed, or were assumed to possess, personal power; and the cold swiftness with which the same individuals turned away from former favourites when these men or women had passed out of the limelight. Moreover, it was clear that personal vanity, with its humiliating ups and downs of inflation and depression, and with its still meaner falsification, was an "occupational disease" of entertaining and being entertained; and, realising my own constitutional weakness in this direction, flight from temptation seemed the better part of valour. But dissatisfaction with my own and other people's human nature was not the only, not perhaps the main reason for my gradual withdrawal from social functions throughout 1884 and 1885, in order to spend my free time as a rent-collector in the East End of London. What happened was that the time-spirit had, at last, seized me and compelled me to concentrate all my free energy in getting the training and the raw material for applied sociology; that is, for research into the constitution

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and working of social organisation, with a view to bettering the life and labour of the people.

Looking back from the standpoint of to-day (1926), it seems to me that two outstanding tenets, some would say, two idols of the mind, were united in this mid-Victorian trend of thought and feeling. There was the current belief in the scientific method, in that intellectual synthesis of observation and experiment, hypothesis and verification, by means of which alone all mundane problems were to be solved. And added to this belief in science was the consciousness of a new motive; the transference of the emotion of self-sacrificing service from God to man.

## THE CULT OF SCIENCE

In these latter days of deep disillusionment, now that we have learnt, by the bitter experience of the Great War, to what vile uses the methods and results of science may be put, when these are inspired and directed by brutal instinct and base motive, it is hard to understand the naïve belief of the most original and vigorous minds of the 'seventies and 'eighties that it was by science, and by science alone, that all human misery would be ultimately swept away. This almost fanatical faith was perhaps partly due to hero-worship. For who will deny that the men of science were the leading British intellectuals of that period; that it was they who stood out as men of genius with international reputations; that it was they who were the self-confident militants of the period; that it was they who were routing the theologians, confounding the mystics, imposing their theories on philosophers, their inventions on capitalists, and their discoveries on medical men; whilst they were at the same time snubbing the artists, ignoring the poets and even casting doubts on the capacity of the politicians?



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Nor was the cult of the scientific method confined to intellectuals. "Halls of Science" were springing up in crowded working-class districts; and Bradlaugh, the fearless exponent of scientific materialism and the "Fruits of Philosophy," was the most popular demagogue of the hour. Persecuted, proscribed and denounced by those who stood in the high places of Church and State, he nevertheless, by sheer force of character and widespread popular support, imposed himself on the House of Commons, and compelled it finally to abandon its theological test for membership. Indeed, in the 'seventies and 'eighties it looked as if whole sections of the British proletariat—and these the élite—would be swept, like the corresponding class on the Continent, into a secularist movement. To illustrate this idolisation of science, I give one quotation from a widely read little book published in 1872, which, on account of the broad culture and passionate sincerity with which the author identifies science with the intellect of man, has become a classic, and which foreshadows a universe over which the human intellect will reign as the creator and moulder of all things, whether on earth or in heaven.

His triumph [the triumph of man regarded as pure intellect], indeed, is incomplete; his Kingdom has not yet come. The Prince of Darkness is still triumphant in many regions of the world; epidemics still rage; death is yet victorious. But the God of Light, the Spirit of Knowledge, the Divine Intellect, is gradually spreading over the planet, and upwards to the skies. . . . *Earth, which is now a purgatory, will be made a paradise, not by idle prayers and supplications, but by the efforts of man himself, and by mental achievements analogous to those which have raised him to his present state. Those inventions and discoveries which have made him, by the grace of God, king of animals, lord of the elements, and sovereign of steam and*

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electricity, were all founded on experiment and observation. . . . When we have ascertained, by means of Science, the methods of Nature's operation, we shall be able to take her place and to perform them for ourselves. When we understand the laws which regulate the complex phenomena of life, we shall be able to predict the future as we are already able to predict comets and eclipses and the planetary movements. . . . Not only will man subdue the forces of evil that are without; he will subdue those that are within. He will repress the base instincts and propensities which he has inherited from the animals below him; he will obey the laws written in his heart; he will worship the divinity that is within him. . . . Idleness and stupidity will be regarded with abhorrence. Women will become the companions of men, and the tutors of their children. The whole world will be united by the same sentiment which united the primeval clan, and which made its members think, feel and act as one. . . . These bodies which now we wear belong to the lower animals; our minds have already outgrown them; already we look upon them with contempt. A time will come when Science will transform them by means which we cannot conjecture, and which if explained to us we would not now understand, just as the savage cannot understand electricity, magnetism, steam. Disease will be extirpated; the causes of decay will be removed; immortality will be invented. And then the earth being small, mankind will emigrate into space and will cross airless Saharas which separate planet from planet, and sun from sun. The earth will become a Holy Land which will be visited by pilgrims from all quarters of the universe. Finally, men will master the forces of Nature; they will become themselves architects of systems, manufacturers of worlds. Man will then be perfect; he will be a creator; he will therefore be what the vulgar worship as God.<sup>1</sup>

This unhesitating reliance on the particular type of

<sup>1</sup> Pages 421, 422 and 425 of *The Martyrdom of Man*, by Winwood Reade, first published in 1872. A new edition has been recently issued by the Rationalist Press Association, with an introduction by F. Legge, giving a short biography of this remarkable man.

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mental activity, which is always associated with modern, or shall I call it Western science, was by far the most potent ferment at work in the mental environment in which I was reared, whether in the books I read or the persons with whom I associated on terms of intimacy. When the brain is young there are written words which serve as master-keys to unlock the mind. Long abstracts of, and extracts from, George Henry Lewes's *History of Philosophy* appear in my diary in the autumn of 1881. The gist of Lewes's argument is a contemptuous dismissal of all metaphysics "as condemned, by the very nature of its method, to wander for ever in one tortuous labyrinth, within whose circumscribed and winding spaces weary seekers are continually finding themselves in the trodden tracks of predecessors who could find no exit." In contrast with this tragic failure of metaphysical speculation the progress of modern science is eulogised in glowing phrases: "Onward and ever onward, mightier and for ever mightier, rolls this wondrous tide of discovery." Then follows his definition of the scientific method, a definition which convinced me at the time and still satisfies me. "Truth is the correspondence between the order of ideas and the order of phenomena, so that the one is the reflection of the other—the movement of thought following the movement of things. This correspondence can never be absolute; it must, from the very structure of the mind, be relative; but this relative accuracy suffices when it enables us to foresee with certainty the changes which will arise in the external order of phenomena under given conditions." It was this "odd trick" to be gained by the human intellect—this forecasting of the mind—by which alone the game of life could be won, if not for the individual, at any rate for the race, that captivated my imagination.

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There is, however, a long way to go between realising the unique value of an intellectual process, and mastering the technique and obtaining the material essential to its application. The circumstances of my life did not permit me to seek out one of the few University institutions then open to women. It is true that "the Potter girls" had enjoyed from childhood upwards one of the privileges of University education. We had associated, on terms of conversational equality, with gifted persons; not only with men of affairs in business and politics, but also with men of science and with leaders of thought in philosophy and religion. In particular, owing to our intimacy with Herbert Spencer, we were friendly with the group of distinguished scientific men who met together at the monthly dinner of the famous "X Club." And here I should like to recall that, among these scientists, the one who stays in my mind as the ideal man of science is, not Huxley or Tyndall, Hooker or Lubbock, still less my friend, philosopher and guide Herbert Spencer, but Francis Galton,<sup>1</sup> whom I used to observe and listen to—I regret to add, without the least reciprocity—with rapt attention. Even to-day I can conjure up, from memory's misty deep, that tall figure with its attitude of perfect physical and mental poise; the clean-shaven face, the thin, compressed mouth with its enigmatical smile; the long upper lip and

<sup>1</sup> Francis Galton and his wife were intimate with my sister Georgie and her husband Daniel Meinertzhagen, at whose house in Rutland Gate I first met them. Afterwards they frequented our house in Prince's Gardens, where my sister Margaret became a special favourite, and undertook to furnish him with a detailed descriptive chart of our family history, which I believe he included in his work on family histories.

Professor Karl Pearson's elaborate *Life of Francis Galton* gives a singularly interesting account of Francis Galton's train of thought and methods of investigation.

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firm chin, and, as if presiding over the whole personality of the man, the prominent dark eyebrows from beneath which gleamed, with penetrating humour, contemplative grey eyes. Fascinating to me was Francis Galton's all-embracing but apparently impersonal beneficence. But, to a recent and enthusiastic convert to the scientific method, the most relevant of Galton's many gifts was the unique contribution of three separate and distinct processes of the intellect; a continuous curiosity about, and rapid apprehension of individual facts, whether common or uncommon; the faculty for ingenious trains of reasoning; and, more admirable than either of these, because the talent was wholly beyond my reach, the capacity for correcting and verifying his own hypotheses, by the statistical handling of masses of data, whether collected by himself or supplied by other students of the problem.

However stimulating and enlightening may be social intercourse with men of mark, their casual conversations at London dinner-parties or during country-house visits cannot take the place of disciplined experiments and observation under expert direction in University laboratories or hospital wards. Any such training, even where open to women, was flagrantly out of bounds for a woman who had my extensive and complicated home duties. Hence the pitifully ineffectual attempts, recorded in my diary, to educate myself, first in algebra and geometry, described in the opening of this chapter as ending in nothing more substantial than a ghost; and secondly in the following London season, in the intervals of home-keeping for my father and little sister, and of entertaining and being entertained, in physiology, partly under the direction of a woman science-teacher, and partly by casual

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attendance on my brother-in-law, William Harrison Cripps,<sup>1</sup> the well-known surgeon, while he was making his microscopic examination into cancer.

The first morning's work with Willie Cripps preparing specimens [here follows an elaborate description of technique of microscopic work]; read through W. H. C.'s *Adenoid Diseases of the Rectum*; had great difficulty in understanding owing to technical phraseology and my ignorance of the subject-matter which he discusses. In my physiological studies must keep clear and distinct two lines of enquiry (1) how a particular organic substance became as it now is, (2) and what is at present its actual structure. Surely, a full knowledge of the present structure should precede the study of "becoming"; unless one was able to see every stage of the evolution. [MS. diary, April 22, 1883.]

Enjoy sitting in that cool room, with fresh breeze through, and green trees on both sides, in an out-of-the-way corner of London [I write about one of the lessons with the science-teacher]. Before us on the table, diagrams, microscopic sections, and various dissections—these last do not distress me but give me genuine pleasure to pick to pieces. One leaves behind all personalities, and strives hard to ascertain the constitution of things, a constitution which to us is eternal and dependent on no one manifestation of it. To me there is a deep and perplexing pathos in this study of life and death, which to some natures might become almost tragic, while in others it develops that half-sad, half-enjoyable, spectator's interest, pleasant in so far as it removes us far above the petty struggles of mean motive and conflicting interest, and sad in as much as it withdraws from our affections their permanency and from our aspirations their motive. In me, such a study strengthens necessarianism; and

<sup>1</sup> William Harrison Cripps, F.R.C.S., the husband of my sister Blanche, became afterwards senior surgeon at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London. His researches into cancer led him to the conclusion that the undiscovered bacillus was localised in particular districts, streets or houses; a conclusion for which there seems some further evidence.

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as I hurry down Tottenham Court Road, and jostle up against men and women of the people, with their various expressions of determined struggle, weak self-indulgence, and discontented effort, *the conviction that the fate of each individual is governed by conditions born of "the distant past"* is irresistibly forced upon me. [MS. diary, May 1883.]

"Referring to your microscopic work," writes my guide, philosopher and friend in the following autumn, "I wish you would take up some line of enquiry, say such an one as the absorbent organs in the leaves, roots and seeds of plants (you will find an indication of them at the end of the *Biology*, but nobody has worked at them to any extent). Great zest is given to work when you have a definite end in view and it becomes both an interest and a discipline. By Xmas I hope you will have something to show me." [Letter from Herbert Spencer, October 8, 1883.]

But in spite of this injunction, and although I realised the value of physical science as a training in scientific method, the whole subject-matter of natural science bored me. I was not interested in rocks and plants, grubs and animals, not even in man considered merely as a biped, with the organs of a biped. What roused and absorbed my curiosity were men and women, regarded—if I may use an old-fashioned word—as "souls," their past and present conditions of life, their thoughts and feelings and their constantly changing behaviour. This field of enquiry was not, as yet, recognised in the laboratories of the universities, or in other disciplined explorations of the varieties of human experience. I may add, by the way, that what turned me away from psychology, even the "psychology" to be found in books, was what seemed to me the barren futility of the textbooks then current. Instead of the exact descriptions of the actual facts of

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individual minds, reacting to particular environments and developing in various directions, I seemed to find nothing but arbitrary definitions of mind in the abstract, which did not correspond with the mental life of any one person, and were, in fact, nothing but hypothetical abstractions from an idealised reflection of the working of the author's own mind—that is, of a superior person of a highly developed race—an idealisation which apparently led to an ungrounded belief in the universal prevalence, throughout human society, of that rare synthetic gift, enlightened self-respect ! I am afraid that, in my haste, I regarded the manipulation of these psychological abstractions as yielding no more accurate information about the world around me than did the syllogisms of formal logic. For any detailed description of the complexity of human nature, of the variety and mixture in human motive, of the insurgence of instinct in the garb of reason, of the multifarious play of the social environment on the individual ego and of the individual ego on the social environment, I had to turn to novelists and poets, to Fielding and Flaubert, to Balzac and Browning, to Thackeray and Goethe. In all this range of truth-telling fiction the verification of the facts or of the conclusions drawn from the facts was impracticable. If I have any vain regrets for absent opportunities it is exactly this: that I grew up to maturity as a sociological investigator without a spell of observation and experiment in the modern science of psychology.

Thrown back on books, books, and again books, I began to select these, not in order to satisfy curiosity and extend interest in life, but deliberately so as to forge an instrument of discovery about human nature in society. The autumn and winter of 1881–82 find me using Lewes's *History of*



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*Philosophy* as a guide through many English, French and German thinkers and translations of Greek philosophers. The following summer, the summer after my mother's death, I begin a systematic study, lasting for over a year, of the *Synthetic Philosophy*. But in spite of the guidance of its author I remain a "doubting Thomas," though a miserably feeble one, about the validity of the Spencerian generalisations.

The following entries in my diary are given, not in strict order of date, but so as to illustrate my response to the current faith in the scientific method and my attempts to grapple with some of the problems involved in its application to human nature in society.

Mr. Spencer called yesterday, and left the *Athenæum* with us with a letter of his to Mr. Mozley—who had insulted him by stating that he (Mr. Mozley) had in boyhood derived similar ideas to Mr. Herbert Spencer's from Mr. Spencer's father. In Mr. Spencer's reply he states his doctrine of evolution so clearly and shortly, that though I confess to but dimly understanding it, yet with a view to the future I shall here transcribe it. [MS. diary, August 3, 1882.] [Here follows transcript.]

Alfred<sup>1</sup> and I had a long discussion over Mr. Spencer's résumé of his philosophy [I note ten days later], resulting in my taking it up to bed and spending a couple of hours over it—eventually rushing downstairs and plunging into *First Principles*—a plunge producing such agreeable sensations that I have since continued the practice every morning before breakfast.

A delicious early morning [I note during our sojourn in our Gloucestershire home] looking towards the hill with sun, shadow and mist uniting in effect, and spreading a mystic joy over trees and slope. Quite clear in my mind that I am on the

<sup>1</sup> The husband of my sister Theresa—C. A. Cripps (now Lord Parmoor), younger brother of William Harrison Cripps.

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right way in reading Herbert Spencer, and in the study of mathematics and geometry; but not so clear as regards literary reading: was tempted, by foolish vanity and desire to accomplish, to read French literature with a view to an article on Balzac, whose extraordinary power of analysis always attracts me. Surely these great analytical students of human nature will be found of use in any future science of the mental life of humanity, when psychology has advanced beyond the study of primitive man, that is, of human characteristics in so far as they distinguish man from other animals. But my instinct tells me that I must work with order; that any attempt to escape from the direct path of historical study will only produce friction of contending purpose. [MS. diary, July 1882.]

There was one riddle in the application of the scientific method to human nature which continuously worried me, and which still leaves me doubtful. Can the objective method, pure and undefiled, be applied to human mentality: can you, for instance, observe, sufficiently correctly to forecast consequences, mental characteristics which you do not yourself possess? Another stumbling-block was the use, by Herbert Spencer and other sociologists, of the analogy between the animal organism and the social organism for the purpose of interpreting the facts of social life.

This objectivity [observation and verification] is possible in all sciences which do not deal with human character and mind [I note in a long review of the philosophy of Schopenhauer]. Even this must be qualified; a certain subjective element creeps in when we discuss the nature of animal intelligence, if once you admit that it differs in degree and not in kind from human intelligence; and without this admission the discussion is baseless and we must restrict ourselves to the purely physical phenomena of animal life. But, when we come to analyse human intelligence, the subjective is prior to the objective element. The elements which build up these complex existences which we call feelings, ideas and acts of will, can only be discovered

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and examined within our own consciousness. By a long and involved series of inferences, the conclusion of which recommends itself to our faith by its congruity with all other experience, and by its confirmation through correct anticipation, we assert that these elements exist in other minds. An appreciation of the exact combination of these elements in the thoughts, feelings and actions of men can result only from a delicate interchange of an objective and subjective experience. In the appreciation of a thought or feeling no thoroughness of observation will make up for the deficiency in personal experience of the thought or feeling [concerned] . . . *the possession of a mental quality is necessary to the perception of it.*<sup>1</sup> The subject-matter with which the student starts is rigidly limited by the limits of his own moral and intellectual nature. The full realisation of this fact seems to me of immense importance. Something beyond keen intellectual faculty is necessary to the psychologist and sociologist. He must himself have experienced types of those mental forces the action of which he desires to foretell or the origin and nature of which he desires to discover. . . .

And this enormous advance in complexity seems to me to vitiate the justice of the analogy between the animal and social organism, used as an argument and not simply as an illustration :

<sup>1</sup> The following quotation from Hazlitt's essay on Shakespeare seems to bear out the suggestion that the psychologist requires to have experienced or to be capable of experiencing the emotions and thought which he desires to portray or analyse: "The striking peculiarity of Shakespeare's mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds—so that it contained a universe of thought and feeling within itself, and had no one peculiar bias, or exclusive excellence more than another. He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become. He not only had in himself the germs of every faculty and feeling, but he could follow them by anticipation, intuitively, into all their conceivable ramifications, through every change of fortune or conflict of passion, or turn of thought. He had 'a mind reflecting ages past,' and present: all the people that ever lived are there" (*Lectures on the English Poets*, by William Hazlitt, p. 71, World's Classics Edition, 1924).

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though it does not in any way diminish the necessity and usefulness of a thorough knowledge of the working of the great laws of evolution on comparatively simple matter, before attempting to study their action on matter which is infinitely more complicated. In order to arrive at true theories regarding the past and future development of society we must study arduously the great social organism itself (a process of incalculable difficulty in the present state of historical knowledge), and not only such among social facts as seem to illustrate a preconceived theory deduced from the elementary workings of nature's laws on the lower planes of life. A conscientious study of animal evolution will teach us the method of investigation to be pursued, will train us in the processes of classification and induction, and will provide us with innumerable illustrations and suggestions; and further, it is absolutely necessary as forming the physical side of the preliminary study into the nature of the social unit man. [MS. diary, October 1884.]

Got back to books again: and stopped as usual by poor health. The whole of my life, from the age of nine, when I wrote a priggish little note on the right books for a child to read, has been one continuous struggle to learn and to think, sacrificing all to this, even physical comfort. When I think of the minuteness of my faculties, which, so far as persistent work goes, are below the average, and of the really Herculean nature of my persistency, my own nature puzzles me. Why should a mortal be born with so much aspiration, so much courage and patience in the pursuit of an ideal, and with such a beggarly allowance of power wherewith to do it? And even now, now that I have fully realised my powerlessness to achieve, have perhaps ceased to value any achievement which I in my dearest dreams thought open to me, even now, my only peaceful and satisfactory life lies in continuous enquiry. Endless questionings of the nature of things, more especially of the queer animal man, and of the laws which force him onward, heaven knows where to? Of the nature of that destination, whether it will answer the wherefore of the long ages of misery and struggle? That old dream of a bird's-eye view of the past, and through it a glimpse into the future—that old dream, now recognised as a dream—fascinates me still. With labour and pain I master some poor fact, I

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clutch it, look at it over and over again like a miser with a coin of gold. At times, I pour before me my little hoard of facts, a tiny heap it is, some of it base coin too. I pass these facts through and through my brain, like a miser passes the gold through his fingers, trying to imagine that before me lies a world of knowledge wherewith I may unite the knots of human destiny. [MS. diary, October 24, 1884.]

## THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY

So much for the belief in science and the scientific method, which was certainly the most salient, as it was the most original, element of the mid-Victorian Time-Spirit. But the scientific method of reasoning, so it seemed to my practical mind, was not an end in itself; it was the means by which a given end could be pursued. It did not, and as I thought could not, yield the purpose of life. What it did was to show the way, and the only way, in which the chosen purpose could be fulfilled. To what end, for what purpose, and therefore *upon what subject-matter* was the new faculty of the intellect to be exercised? And here I come to the second element of the mid-Victorian Time-Spirit: the emotion, which like the warp before the woof, gives strength and direction to the activities of the intellect. I suggest it was during the middle decades of the nineteenth century that, in England, the impulse of self-subordinating service was transferred, consciously and overtly, from God to man. It would be interesting to trace the first beginnings of this elusive change of feeling. How far was it latent in the dogma that underlay the rise of American Democracy, that all men are born free and equal, with equal rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? I recall the saying of a well-known leader of the American ethical movement: "As a free-born citizen, I deny the existence of an autocratic Supreme Being to whom I, and all other

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men, owe obedience and worship; it offends my American sense of independence and equality!" How far was the passing of the Kingdom of God and the coming of the Kingdom of Man implicit in the "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" of the French Revolution, with its worship of the Goddess of Reason? We certainly find this new version of "the whole duty of man" in the characteristic political maxim of the British Utilitarians, which prescribed, as the object of human effort, the greatest happiness of the greatest number. With a more romantic content we see it in the life and work of Robert Owen, with his "worship of the supremely good principle in human nature," which became a "social bible," promulgated by "social missionaries" in a "social cathedral."

In the particular social and intellectual environment in which I lived, this stream of tendencies culminated in Auguste Comte's union of the "religion of humanity" with a glorification of science, in opposition to both theology and metaphysics, as the final stage in the development of the human intellect. And once again I note that the reading of books was in my case directed and supplemented by friendly intercourse with the men and women most concerned with the subject-matter of the books. As a student I was familiar with the writings of the most famous of the English disciples and admirers of Auguste Comte. I had learnt my lesson from George Henry Lewes. I delighted in John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*, and had given to his *System of Logic* and *Principles of Political Economy* an assiduous though somewhat strained attention. Above all, the novels of George Eliot had been eagerly read and discussed in the family circle. But I doubt whether my sister Margaret and I would have ordered from the London Library all the works of Comte himself

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if it had not been for a continuously friendly intercourse with the Frederic Harrisons,<sup>1</sup> at reciprocal dinner-parties in London, picnics in the Cliveden Woods and week-end parties in our respective country homes. In after years the Frederic Harrisons stand out from a host of former London acquaintances as loyal friends, encouraging me in my first attempt at authorship, and in due course welcoming as another friend The Other One. But in those early days they appeared to me as "society folk." For, in spite of heterodox opinions and courageous association with men and women deemed to be undesirable and even pernicious, this accomplished couple, possibly because they were at once well-to-do and personally attractive, were full-fledged members of political society, as distinguished from the narrower Court circle and the more fashionable sporting set. At the social functions of the Gladstonian Administration of 1880-1886 they were much in evidence; more especially were they on terms of intimate comradeship with the rising group of Radical statesmen and journalists. Unlike the ruck of clever authors, successful barristers, and minor politicians on the make, they selected their acquaintances according to their own scale of values; and, once chosen, they stood through good and evil repute by those whom they deemed to be friends. A brilliant publicist, an insistent lecturer, a most versatile

<sup>1</sup> Frederic Harrison (1831-1923), M.A., D.C.L. (Oxford), Hon. Litt.D. (Camb.), Hon. LL.D. (Aberdeen); president of the English Positivist Committee, 1880-1905; member of Royal Commission on Trade Unions, 1867-69; author of more than a score of books published from 1862 to 1919, and of innumerable articles, addresses, introductions, prefaces, etc.; Professor of Jurisprudence and International Law to the Council of Legal Education, London, 1877-89; Alderman, London County Council, 1889-93.

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and sympathetic conversationalist, Frederic Harrison had also the greater distinction of being an original thinker and a public-spirited citizen, always eager to appreciate new ideas and encourage unrecognised intellectuals. It was he who first explained to me the economic validity of trade unionism and factory legislation; who taught me to resist the current depreciation of the mediæval social organisation; and who, in spite of his extreme "positivism," emphasised the real achievements in their own time of the Catholic Church and the craft gilds. The wife, with her luminous dark eyes and consummate coils of hair, her statuesque figure and graceful garments, was a befitting mate to the most eloquent preacher of the religion of humanity. Always a "St. Clothilde" to her Auguste, she listened with reverence to his words from the lectern of Newton Hall, and added cultured comments to his table-talk; whilst in his absence she regaled her friends with the pleasantest form of gossip—the gossip about political and literary personages—phrased with motherly beneficence, but spiced with just enough denigrating wit to make the mixture thoroughly delectable.

To return to the pile of books from the London Library. The result is memorised in a scene on the Westmorland moors in the autumn of 1879, two or three years before my mother's death.

Two girls, aged twenty-five and twenty-one respectively, stride across the Rusland bog towards the Old Man of Coniston, in a driving mist, with packets of sandwiches and cases of cigarettes bulging out of short and shabby waterproofs. They are discussing vigorously their readings from Auguste Comte. In these discussions the elder one, Margaret, always takes the leading part, as she reads six hours to the younger girl's two. The three stages in



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the development of the human intellect are accepted without demur; "Though how does this fit in with Buckle's climatic and increased productivity theory?" reflects Beatrice, conscious of having just completed a painstaking review of Buckle's *History of Civilisation* in her private MS. book—secret writing which not even her one pal among her sisters is invited to read. Presently they come to rest on a dripping stone wall. After vainly attempting to light a cigarette, Margaret, with genial smile, glittering black eyes and long wisps of lank brown hair flying in the winds, sums up her criticism.

"Dreadful old pedant; horrid French; what a dark chasm in style between him and Voltaire. Some of his ideas detestable; others absurd. That spiritual power, I hate it. Having kicked religion out of the front door of the human intellect, why should it sneak in through the servants' hall? For after all, Beatrice," with rising acerbity, "all Comte's humans are servile. The man worships the woman. Who wants to worship any one, leave alone a woman? And the woman turns out, in the end, to be no better than a domestic servant with no life of her own. Thank heavens, he puts the working man in his right place; Great Hearts, may be; we've all got to think of them in order to do them good. But they've just got to obey; no more strikes; jolly good thing too!"

Short pause while Beatrice, having lit her cigarette by manipulating the match-box (a trick taught her sitting out with a ballroom partner in a country-house garden in the early hours of a July morning), hands the stump to Margaret, who lights up and continues in a more complacent tone.

"Rather like that notion of a committee of bankers to rule the world. The Barclays, Buxtons, and Hoares strike

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me as a solid lot; dull but solid; just the sort father likes us to marry, and one likes one's sisters to marry."

"But why a committee of *bankers*?" interposes the younger one. "Why not chairmen of railway companies, shipowners—for that matter, timber merchants? Machinery, raw material, trade routes, what do bankers know about them? And whether you like it or not, there's the working class who've got votes and mean to have more."

Margaret, with a note of good-tempered contempt—"My dear child, working men just don't count; it's money that counts, and the bankers have got it. Not brains, but money." And with a rising crescendo of conviction—"Credit; credit, Beatrice; it is *credit* that rules the world. Men and women have just got to follow the bankers' loans, or clear out. Over and again I have watched it. Remember how Baring and Glyn beat father about that new railway in Canada, which after all didn't pay. Father had the brains but they had the money; and it was *he* who had to resign, not they."

Long pause: Beatrice doubts the sister's synonymous use of the terms "money" and "credit." "Father said," she muses, "that the amount of credit depended on the *state of mind of the capitalist: a state of mind which does not always correspond with the state of affairs; hence trade booms and depressions. Money was a commodity like any other commodity, except that it had a specialised use and a legalised status.* 'My little Bee,' he added, with his dear beaming smile, 'might think out for herself whether cheques are money or credit and let me know.' And I never did so," she ruefully recollects.

Margaret, having swung round and jumped off the wall on the other side—"Come along, Beatrice, we've got to get up there before we eat our lunch; I'm getting hungry. . . .

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The plain truth is that all this fantastic stuff about the future is nonsense. No one knows or can know what is going to happen to the world. The root question raised by Comte—the only one that concerns you and me, is whether we are all of us, here and now, to tumble over each other and get in each other's way by trying to better the world, or whether we are each one of us to pursue his or her own interest according to common sense. I'm for each one of us looking after our own affairs. Of course I include family affairs. One has to look after father and mother, husband and children, brothers and sisters. But there it stops. Perhaps," slowly and doubtfully, "if there is time and money to spare, sisters' children." Briskly dogmatic—"Certainly not uncles or aunts; still less, cousins; they're not as good as business associates, and only a shade better than London acquaintances. As for the service of man, the religion of humanity; Heavens, Beatrice, what *does* it mean? It is just underbred theology, with no bishops to bless it."

So spake the Ego that denies. Some forty years afterwards, roused by a mother's sorrow for one son dead on the battlefield, another in a prison cell on grounds of conscience, the Ego that affirms impels her to stand fast by the brotherhood of man, whether friend or enemy; and in particular to sacrifice fast-failing strength to prison reform, where she builded better than the world knows.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the autumn of 1880 Margaret married Henry Hobhouse of Hadspen, Somersetshire. She had seven children—her youngest son being killed in the War. She died 1920, her husband and five children surviving her. In the last years of her life, owing to the imprisonment during the War of her eldest child Stephen (who had joined the Society of Friends, and had refused to be burdened with property or the prospect of property) as an "absolutist" conscientious objector, she published *An Appeal to Caesar*, and became interested in prison reform,

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How far, as a young girl, I agreed with my sister's acid testing of the worship of man I do not recollect. Notwithstanding our friendship with the Frederic Harrisons and other leading Comtists, it certainly never occurred to me to join the Church of Humanity. Yet five years afterwards I find, as the prefacing text to a new MS. book, copied out in large letters for my own edification, the following quotation from Auguste Comte:

"Our harmony as moral beings is impossible on any other foundation but altruism. Nay more, altruism alone can enable us to live in the highest and truest sense. To live for others is the only means of developing the whole existence of man.

"Towards humanity, who is the only true great Being, we, the conscious elements of whom She is the compound, shall henceforth direct every aspect of our life, individual and collective. Our thoughts will be devoted to the knowledge of Humanity, our affections to the love, our actions to her service." [MS. diary, 1884.]

Dined last night with the Frederic Harrisons and went with them to the Positivist Hall in the City. "Live for others" was the text of Harrison's address. He spoke bitterly of the gibes and sneers with which Comte's doctrine had been received. He pointed out that positivism was the only sincere religious form of the present day; that all religions and sects were making the service of humanity the keynote of religion; but refused to recognise that they did so. His address seemed to me forced—a valiant effort to make a religion out of nothing; a pitiful attempt by poor humanity to turn its head round and worship its tail. Practically we are all positivists; we all make the service of man the leading doctrine of our lives. But in order to serve humanity we need inspiration from a superhuman force towards

initiating the enquiry which eventuated in the remarkable report by Stephen Hobhouse and Fenner Brockway, entitled *English Prisons To-day*, 1922. Many of the proposals of this report have been embodied in the recent transformation of prison administration in England, effected, not by Act of Parliament, but as a result of the silent conversion of the Home Office bureaucracy.

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which we are perpetually striving. [MS. diary, March 15, 1889.]<sup>1</sup>

Social questions [I write in the MS. Diary of 1884] are the vital questions of to-day: they take the place of religion. I do not pretend to solve them. Their solution seems largely a matter of temperament. Still, the most insignificant mind has a certain bias, has an intellectual as well as a moral conscience. If we wilfully defy the laws of our special mental constitution we must suffer the penalty of a diseased and twisted nature, and must leave life conscious of faithlessness to the faith that is in us. . . . A higher standard of motive is asked for in social action than in any other. . . . The social reformer professes to be an uncompromising idealist; he solemnly declares that he is working for the public weal. His whole authority, derived from public opinion, arises from the faith of the people in his honesty of purpose and strength of understanding. If he uses his mind to manipulate facts, and twist them so that they shall serve his own personal interests, if the craving for power is greater than the desire for truth, he is a traitor to the society towards which he professes loyal service. [MS. diary, April 22, 1884.]

Now, without pretending to sum up the influence of the time-spirit on the social activities of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, what is clear is that upon me—in 1883, a woman of twenty-five—it led to a definite conclusion. From the flight of emotion away from the service of God to the service of man, and from the current faith in the scientific method, I drew the inference that the most hopeful form of social service was the craft of a social investigator. And some such conclusion seems to have been reached by many of my contemporaries. For detailed descriptions of the life and labour of the people in all its various aspects, sensational or scientific, derived from personal observation or statistical calculation, become a characteristic feature of the publications of this period, whether newspapers or

<sup>1</sup> I place here this later extract because it gives my reason for not joining the "Church of Humanity."

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magazines, plays or novels, the reports of philanthropic organisations or the proceedings of learned societies. It may be said that this novel concentration of attention on the social condition of the people was due neither to intellectual curiosity nor to the spirit of philanthropy, but rather to a panic fear of the newly enfranchised democracy. But this is looking at the same fact from another standpoint. For even the most fanatical Socialist asserted that his hopes for the future depended on a deliberately scientific organisation of society, combined with the growth among the whole body of the people of the desire and capacity for disinterested social service.

It was in the autumn of 1883 that I took the first step as a social investigator, though I am afraid the adventure was more a sentimental journey than a scientific exploration. What had been borne into me during my book studies was my utter ignorance of the manual-working class, that is, of four-fifths of my fellow-countrymen. During the preceding London season I had joined a Charity Organisation Committee and acted as one of its visitors in the slums of Soho; but it was clear to me that these cases of extreme destitution, often distorted by drink and vice, could no more be regarded as a fair sample of the wage-earning class than the "sporting set" of London society could be considered representative, either in conduct or in intelligence, of the landed aristocracy and business and professional class, out of which its individual members had usually sprung. How was I to get an opportunity of watching, day by day, in their homes and in their workshops, a sufficient number of normal manual-working families to enable me to visualise the class as a whole; to understand what was meant by chronic poverty and insecurity of livelihood; to ascertain whether such conditions actually existed in any but a small fraction of the

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great body of the people? Were the manual workers what I was accustomed to call civilised? What were their aspirations, what was their degree of education, what their capacity for self-government? How had this class, without administrative training or literary culture, managed to initiate and maintain the network of Nonconformist chapels, the far-flung friendly societies, the much-abused Trade Unions, and that queer type of shop, the Co-operative store?

## A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

The romantic note in this adventure arose from finding, among my own kith and kin, my first chance of personal intimacy, on terms of social equality, with a wage-earning family. For out of the homesteads of the "domestic manufacturers" of Lancashire and Yorkshire had sprung the Heyworths, my mother's family. During the last quarter of the eighteenth century some few of these master craftsmen had risen to be mill-owners and merchants, the greater number being merged in the new class of factory hands. My grandfather, Lawrence Heyworth, belonged to the master-class; but he married a pretty cousin, who had been born and bred in the home of a power-loom weaver. This unknown grandmother—she died of tuberculosis when my mother was yet a child—was, however, not the nearest tie with the humble folk of Bacup. There was the beloved old nurse and household saint, Martha Mills, nicknamed Dada [see pp. 35–38], who had been selected by my grandfather at the age of eighteen to accompany my mother and her brother on their continental journey, meeting at Rome my father and his sister; she watched the coming of the marriage, and she had remained my mother's inseparable companion until death parted them. With

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this explanation I fall back on entries in my diary and letters to my father during my visit to Bacup.

I have listened many a time to mother's old stories of Bacup life as we paced up and down the walks of the Standish gardens or along the Rusland lanes.

The last time, I think, was on a March morning at Standish [a few weeks before her sudden death]. I remember well the sensation of the soft west wind and of the sweet sights and sounds of the coming spring, as I listened dreamily to those well-known tales mother loved to tell—of her grandfather who would put on his old clothes to go to the Manchester market if times were good, and call on his wife to bring him his new hat and best coat if he felt his credit shaky; of the old grandmother sitting bolt upright in her wooden stays in her straight-backed chair, giving sage advice to her four sons; or kneeling by her bed in the midnight hours praying to her God, watched in the dim light of the moon or coming dawn by the awe-struck little Laurencina.

And the sweet old tale of mother's first visit to Bacup.

Father and daughter arriving late after a long coach journey. "I want my supper," cried little Miss Heyworth as her father tried to carry her to bed. "I want my supper; I won't go to bed without my supper." The idea of bed supperless associated in the little woman's mind with disgrace and punishment. "Let be, Lawrence," called out the tall quaint nightcapped figure over the banister; "let the child have its supper if it will. Here, Sarah, take the child and give it some milksop, the fire will soon be blown up a bit." So dignified little Miss Heyworth was led into the kitchen by sleepy Sarah and placed in a chair by the table, and the fire blown up a bit. But having saved her dignity, poor little Laurencina, dazed by the light and strangeness of the place, burst out into sobs, between which the willing Sarah distinguished "I want to go to bed, I want to go to Papa."

Eighteen months had passed away since that March morning. Rosebud [my youngest sister], Dada, and I were sitting by the firelight in the cosy little sitting-room at The Argoed [our Mon-



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mouthshire home]. I was listening again to old stories of Baeup life. Not the same old stories, but descriptions of chapel and Sunday school, and long walks along dirty lanes to prayer meetings in weavers' cottages.

"Surely, Da," said I, turning my eyes for a moment from the fascinating scenes in a coal fire, "some of the Akeds must be our kin." "Well, let's see," says our old nurse, putting her hands on her knees and meditating; "theic's John Aked, he's a reed-maker, now out o' work, nephew of Mrs. Heyworth. Then he's got two brothers, James, manager of the waterworks, and William, who is, I fancy, rather queer; I don't think he does much. Then there's Mrs. Ashworth, Miss Aked as was. I was apprenticed to her in the dressmaking line before I went to Miss Heyworth. She married James Ashworth, a mill-owner, a rich man; she's a widow now, and what you call rather close with her money. I don't think there's any other of your grandmother's relations left besides them as I have mentioned; at least I am not aware of it."

"Da," said I, as I watched a narrow bridge of black coal give way, tumble into the red-hot mass below and burst into flame; "I should dearly love to go to Bacup next time you go." "Well, you know I can always go; there's no occasion to wait for that," answered the dear old woman, "but my friends up there would be astonished to see a Miss Potter coming along with me; they are not accustomed to such grand folk. I think they would be what they call 'flayed' by you." "Oh!" cried I, jumping up with the delightful consciousness of an original idea, "I wouldn't be Miss Potter, I would be Miss Jones, farmer's daughter, near Monmouth."

Somewhat to my surprise the God-fearing Martha Mills eagerly agreed to carry out the "pious fraud."

It was a wet November evening 1883, when Mrs. Mills and Miss Jones picked their way along the irregularly paved and badly lighted back-streets of Bacup. The place seemed deserted. There was that curious stillness in the air which overtakes a purely manufacturing town when the mills with their noise and their lights are closed—the mill-hands with their free loud voices are "cleaning up" or enjoying "Biffin" by their own fireside.

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"There, m'am, there's Irwell Terrace Chapel," said Mrs. Mills as they stood for a moment on a little stone bridge, under which the small river Irwell splashed as merrily as it could, considering its free mountain descent, over bits of broken crockery, old boots and pieces of worn-out machinery; "and there's the chapel-house adjoining it," continued she, "where John Ashworth the chapel-keeper lives, him as we're going to stay with." "Da," said Miss Jones in an emphatic tone, "you really must not call me m'am; now wait a bit and summon up your courage to tell that little lie, and remember the words of the Apostle Paul, 'Whatever ye do, do heartily.'"

Here follow letters to my father dated November 1883:

[*First Letter*].—We arrived at Bacup about 6.30 and found our way along very ill-lighted back-streets to this old-fashioned house at the back of the chapel. We were received by a regular old Puritan and his daughter (a mill-hand) in the most hearty fashion; prayers being offered up for our safety and spiritual well-being while under their roof. After we had enjoyed some delicious tea and home-made bread and butter, various of the elders dropped in to welcome Mrs. Mills, to whom they are evidently devoted, and who is quite a great lady amongst them. She introduced me with the most bare-faced effrontery as "Miss Jones, farmer's daughter, who had come here to see town life and manufactures," and they all showed themselves anxious to "lighten my ignorance" on things material and spiritual. I have been quite received into the charmed circle of artisan and small bourgeois life, and have made special friends with John Aked, a meek, gentle-hearted man, who suffers from the constitutional melancholy of the Aked family. I hear that a brother and sister of Grandmamma Heyworth committed suicide, and two or three of the family have been threatened with suicidal mania. Perhaps it is from that quarter that we get our "Weltschmerz." This morning he escorted us through Bacup, and I saw Rose Cottage and Willow Cottage, where our grandmama lived and died. Also Bankside and Fern Hill, the houses of the great Heyworth and Ormerod families. We dined with John Wooded, his wife and only son (cousins of Da's) and I have been listening to one continuous kind-hearted gossip inter-

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persed with pious ejaculations and shrewd remarks on the most likely method of getting the good things of this world. Certainly the way to see industrial life is to live amongst the workers, and I am surprised at the complete way they have adopted me as one of their own class. I find it less amusing and much more interesting than I expected; and I am heartily glad that I made the venture.

[*Second Letter*].—I am going on most satisfactorily. I find a diary out of the question; one has neither the time nor the place for writing. These folk live all day in "company"; there are always some mill-hands [cotton-weavers] out of work who spend their days chatting in each other's houses. This house, too, is the centre of chapel-goers, and is used by the relieving officer to distribute the poor-rate.

Bacup is quite a small manufacturing town. The "old gentry," "them as really was gentry," have disappeared, and the present manufacturers are self-made men, "who are much more greedy like than the old lot." The Whitakers still own the land, but they come only to drain the land of money, to the evident indignation of the inhabitants. The Ormerods and Heyworths were looked upon "as real gentry." John Aked told me yesterday (in a six-miles' walk with him across the country; he is out of work) that "Lawrence Heyworth was one of those men who married his servant, and she was my aunt; but I've heard tell by those who've seen her, she was a bonny one to look at." I asked him what had become of the family, and he said, "I've not heard mich of them, save Mrs. Potter, and folk say she was an able, stirring body; you've a look of that, Miss Jones, far more like a male than a female to talk wi'."

They have not as yet the slightest suspicion: the old hands look at me with admiration, "as a right useful sort of body as would be a comfort to my father," and the young men with a certain amount of amazement and fear. One shrewd old man smelt a rat and asked me whether my father was not a Lord, and when I told him he was an honest farmer, he strained all my knowledge of farming by cross-questions as to stock, etc.; but at last he was disarmed, and remarked that if he came south he would "coom un 'ave a chat wi' ye father," and he would like

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to see these Welsh lasses "if they'd all got sich white teeth and glistening 'air" as I; but he thought we had it "middling snod (smooth) wi' ye, e'cn warty" (even on weekdays). The same shrewd old man told me a lot about the failure of the company mills owned by working men; how the managers were invariably tipped to take worse goods for the same money, and how the committees of working men "got talkin' like."

Many of these are shut up; in fact, trade here is worse now than it has ever been; but there is comparatively little poverty, and those who remain out of work move on to the big towns where there are more "odd jobs." The wife of the old man with whom we were "ta in" was a jolly fat woman who talked such broad Lancashire that I could scarce understand her; but in the course of the evening she bashfully admitted that she "summat took a bit of backy," whereupon I produced my cigarette-case and offered the company some "Welsh cigars." You would have laughed, father, to see me sitting amongst four or five mill-hands smoking quietly, having been voted "good company," "interesting like" to talk wi'. Under the benign influence of tobacco the elder ones came out with the history of their lives, gave me a list of their various successive occupations, and some of them of their series of wives. I was surprised at their fair-mindedness, and at the kindness of their view of men and things; now they all recognise that men get on from having certain qualities and that "na makin' of laws can alter that." This class of respectable working man takes little or no interest in politics (they have no votes); their thoughts are set on getting on in this world and the next; their conversation consists chiefly of personalities and religion. The old man and his daughter with whom we were staying are a veritable study in puritan life on its more kindly side; worth a dozen history books on the subject. We always have prayers in the evening, and I have been constituted the reader as I pronounce "so distinct like." It is curious how completely at home I feel with these people, and how they open their hearts to me and say that I'm "the sort of woman 'they' can talk straight away with." I can't help thinking that it would be as well if politicians would live amongst the various classes they legislate for, and find out what are their wishes and ideas. It seems to me we stand the chance, in our

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so-called representative government, of representing and working out the wishes of the idler sort of people, who, because they have no quiet occupation absorbing their time and energy, have time and energy to make a row, and wish to alter things because they don't fit themselves. Of course it would be absurd to generalise from such a narrow basis; but much that one sees and hears whilst living with the working men and women as one of them, sets one thinking that a little more patient observation might be advisable before carrying out great organic changes, which may or may not be right. Mere philanthropists are apt to overlook the existence of an independent working class, and when they talk sentimentally of the "people" they mean really the "ne'er-do-wells." It is almost a pity that the whole attention of this politician should be directed towards the latter class.

[*Third Letter*].—I have just received your letter. I will certainly meet you at Manchester Monday, but don't on any account come here; Da says they would never forgive her if they found it out!

The dear people have accepted me so heartily and entertained me so hospitably as one of themselves that it would be cruel to deceive them.

We dined this morning in a most comfortable cottage, owned by a mill-hand with three sons, mill-hands. (The) afternoon I spent in going over two or three mills, introduced by my friends to their managers, and finished up by going through the Co-op. stores with the manager. I told him I had been sent by my father to enquire into the management of Co-ops. as you wanted to start one; and he took me into his counting-house, showed me his books and explained the whole thing. It is entirely owned and managed by working men. Membership entails spending a certain amount there; and the dividend is paid according to the amount spent per quarter, though it is not paid out until the share is paid up through accumulation. In this way there is a double check on the management; the shareholder requiring his dividend, and the consumer requiring cheap and good articles, and as the manager remarked, "Females look pretty sharp arter that." It has been established twenty years or more and has never paid less than 12½ per cent.; the working expenses only

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come to 5 per cent. on capital turned over. No member can have more than £100 in stock, and any one can become a member on the payment of three shillings and sixpence entrance fee, and on the original terms. The manager gave me a graphic account of his trouble with the committee of working men; and interested me by explaining the reasons of the failure of most of the Co-op. mills, all of which I will tell you over our cigarettes.

We went to tea in another cottage, and have just been listening to a somewhat dreary "spiritual oration" from our religiously minded host. A miner by profession, he finished up by saying that "God Almighty did all things right; that 'e'd *bouried* the coal sa deep 'cause if it 'ud ben o' the top the women would 'ave ta'en all the cobs and left all the small." You would be amused at my piety, dear father; yesterday, in one of the Sunday schools, I came to the rescue of a meek elderly teacher who was being pertly questioned by a forward young woman as to Adam's responsibility for our sin. I asked her whether "she did not 'favour' her parents" and made her draw the rather far-fetched inference. The meek elderly man shook me warmly by the hand as we left, and enquired if "he could do aught for me while I was in Baeup." But the only way to understand these people is, for the time, to adopt their faith, and look at things in their light; then one gets a clear picture (undisturbed by any critically antagonistic spirit) of their life, both material and mental. And to me, there is a certain charm and restfulness in their simple piety and absolute ignorance of the world.

As regards the "material life" I am sometimes rather hard up for meat, and my diet is principally oatcake and cheese, with the butter which we brought with us. Ev'ry evening I have my cigarette in a rocking-chair by the kitchen fire, having persuaded my friends that all Welshwomen smoke. My host accepted a cigarette the first night, saying, "I main 'ave a bit but a bitter 'ull go a long wa'"; so after puffing once or twice he snuffs it out and puts it carefully on the corner of the mantelpiece for the next night: "On musna' tak too mich o' a gude thing, fur mooney is a slattering thing" (easily spent). Their income is only £1 a week, so that without the hospitality of our neighbours we

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should not have much to live on. We go to Mrs. Ashworth's to-morrow. She is universally disliked, being very rich and very close-fisted; and nobody receiving aught from her now or knowing where it will go to at her death. In order to avoid paying the tax on her carriage, she has taken it off the wheels, and has some arrangement by which it is mounted when wanted: (so say her cousins). I expect a good deal of condescension from her, as when we met her the other day in the butcher's shop, where we were paying a friendly visit, she gave me the slightest nod and did not shake hands. . . .

Two memories arise out of the above-mentioned visit to Mrs. Ashworth. In order to impress the Welsh farmer's daughter, my purse-proud cousin brought out the photographs of her much-honoured relatives, my grandfather Heyworth and his brothers, and his sons and their children; luckily for me, she had no photographs of the Potter family! And her death in 1892, without a will, led to a rare example of unworldliness and moral fastidiousness on the part of these Bacup cotton operatives. No less than eighty thousand pounds was divided, according to the law of intestacy, in equal portions among her next-of-kin, who happened to be two groups of surviving first cousins; consisting, on the one hand, of eleven wage-earners, one earning less than twenty shillings a week, and, on the other, of the relatively wealthy sons of Grandmother Heyworth—the only daughter my mother, being dead. The eleven wage-earners met together, and, after prayer, decided that it was against Christian brotherhood and natural equity for them to monopolise this unexpected heritage, to the exclusion of the children of the deceased first cousins; and they proceeded to divide their share in equal amounts, among themselves and some thirty of the younger generation, whose parents, being also first cousins of Mrs. Ashworth, were dead. Thus

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the eleven legal heirs found themselves possessed, not of thousands, but of hundreds of pounds each. They naïvely notified their action to the Heyworth brothers in order that these also might share out their portion with the children of their dead sister. Needless to say, these "men of property" refused to follow suit, on the common-sense ground that "law was law, and property was property"; and that there was no more reason for them to share their own wind-fall with well-to-do nephews and nieces than that they should give it away in charity, which no one would expect of them.

[*Third Letter continued*].—I have spent the day in the chapels and schools. After dinner, a dissenting minister dropped in and I had a long talk with him; he is coming for a cigarette this evening after chapel. He told me that in all the chapels there was a growing desire among the congregation to have political and social subjects treated in the pulpit, and that it was very difficult for a minister, now, to please. He also remarked that, in districts where co-operation amongst the workmen (in industrial enterprise) existed, they were a much more independent and free-thinking set.

There is an immense amount of co-operation in the whole of this district; the stores seem to succeed well, both as regards supplying the people with cheap articles and as savings banks paying good interest. Of course I am just in the centre of the dissenting organisation; and as our host is the chapel keeper and entertains all the ministers who come here, I hear all about the internal management. Each chapel, even of the same denomination, manages its own affairs; and there are monthly meetings of all the members (male and female) to discuss questions of expenditure, etc. In fact each chapel is a self-governing community, regulating not only chapel matters but overlooking the private life of its members.

One cannot help feeling what an excellent thing these dissenting organisations have been for educating this class for self-government. I can't help thinking, too, that one of the best



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preventives against the socialistic tendency of the coming democracy would lie in local government; which would force the respectable working man to consider political questions as they come up in local administration. Parliament is such a far-off thing, that the more practical and industrious lot say that it is "gormless meddling with it" (useless), and they leave it to the "gabblers." But they are keen enough on any local question which comes within their own experiences, and would bring plenty of shrewd sound sense to bear on the actual management of things.

Certainly the earnest successful working man is essentially conservative as regards the rights of property and the non-interference of the central government; and though religious feeling still has an immense hold on this class, and forms a real basis for many lives, the most religious of them agree that the younger generation are looking elsewhere for subjects of thought and feeling.

It seems to me of great importance that the political thought should take a practical instead of a theoretical line; that each section of the community should try experiments on a small scale, and that the promoters should see and reap the difficulties and disadvantages of each experiment as it is executed. There is an immense amount of spare energy in this class, now that it is educated, which is by no means used up in their mechanical occupation. When the religious channel is closed up it must go somewhere. It can be employed either in the *practical* solution of social and economic questions, or in the purely intellectual exercise of political theorising and political discussion about problems considered in the abstract.

Forgive all these crudely expressed ideas. I have jotted them down just as they have crossed my mind. I am immensely interested in what I hear and see. But it is a daring thing in a young woman to drop "caste"; and that is why I am anxious it should not be talked about. I have sufficient knowledge of men to make them be to me as I choose; but not every one would understand that one had that power, and without it, it would not be a profitable or wise adventure. I have seen two more Aked brothers. They are all delicate-featured, melancholy men, with beautiful *hands*. There is a universal interest in our family.

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I think they would be somewhat horrified if they knew that this "stirring lass who is up in everything" was one of "the fashionable Miss Potters who live in grand houses and beautiful gardens and marry enormously wealthy men." But they evidently feel that there is something very strange about me. Their generalisations about "Welsh women" will be rather quaint by the time I go!

In living amongst mill-hands of East Lancashire [I reflect a few months later] I was impressed with the depth and realism of their religious faith. It seemed to absorb the entire nature, to claim as its own all the energy unused in the actual struggle for existence. Once the simple animal instincts were satisfied the surplus power, whether physical, intellectual or moral, was devoted to religion. Even the social intercourse was based on religious sympathy and common religious effort. It was just this one-idea'd-ness and transparentness of life which attracted my interest and admiration. For a time it contrasted favourably with the extraordinarily complex mental activity arising in the cosmopolitan life of London—an activity which in some natures tends to paralyse action and dissipate thought.

The same quality of one-idea'd-ness is present in the Birmingham Radical set, earnestness and simplicity of motive being strikingly present. Political conviction takes the place here of religious faith; and intolerance of scepticism of the main articles of the creed is as bitter in the one case as in the other. Possibly the Bible, from its inherent self-contradiction, is a more promising ground for the individualism than the Radical programme and the less likely to favour the supremacy of one interpreter. Heine said some fifty years ago, "Talk to an Englishman on religion and he is a fanatic; talk to him on politics and he is a man of the world." It would seem to me from my slight experience of Bacup and Birmingham, that that part of the Englishman's nature which has found gratification in religion is now drifting into political life. When I suggested this to Mr. Chamberlain he answered, "I quite agree with you, and I rejoice in it. I have always had a grudge against religion for absorbing the passion in man's nature." It is only natural then that, this being his view, he should find in the unpromising belief of his own set a more sympathetic atmosphere

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wherein to recruit his forces to battle with the powers of evil, than in the somewhat cynical, or at any rate indefinitely varied and qualified, political opinions of London society. [MS. diary, March 16, 1884.]

To complete the tale, I give the entries and letters relating to other visits in 1886 and 1889, after I had become an investigator in the East End of London.

Three years passed away—and Miss Jones again came to Bacup. She had lost her bloom of body and mind; some of her old friends hardly recognised her. The now familiar scene of working-class life had lost its freshness—adventure had lost its charm, and conscience had become more uneasy, even of white lies! So she lived among the people, keenly observant of the larger features of their life—but haunted with a spiritless melancholy. The grand old puritan with his vigorous, homely, religious feeling had passed away; the amiable and gentle John Aked had gone to the rest vouchsafed by heaven even to melancholy Akeds; young children had grown up to years of discretion. Old Bacup remained unaltered among the bleak high hills. The mills, now working busily overtime, nestled in the valley, long unpaved streets of two-storied cottages straggled irregularly up the hills. The old coaching inn, with its air of refined age, still stood behind the new buildings representing municipal life; a “Co-op.” shop asserted its existence with almost vulgar prominence. The twenty chapels of all denominations, the parish church, and the “gentry-built” new church, stood on the same ground and are as yet unemptied. Bacup life is still religious—the book of science, insinuating itself into the mill-hand’s cottage, has not yet ousted the “book of life.” The young man goes to chapel, but he will not teach in the Bible class or the Sunday school. The books from the free “Co-op.” library interest him more; his talk about God is no longer inspired by the spirit of self-devoting faith. But Bacup, in spite of municipal life and co-operative industry, is spiritually still part of the “old world.” It knows nothing of the complexities of modern life, and in the monotony of its daily existence likens the hand-loom village of a century ago. The restless

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ambition, the complicated motive and the far-stretching imagination of cosmopolitanism find no place in the gentle minds of Bacup folk. They are content with the doings of their little town—and say that even in Manchester they feel oppressed—and not “homely like.”

I was interested in the mill-hand's life. So long as the hours do not include overtime, the work is as healthful to body and mind as it well could be. Sitting by the hands at work, watching the invigorating quickness of the machinery, the pleasant fellowship of men, women and children, the absence of care and the presence of common interest—the general well-being of well-earned and well-paid work—one was tempted to think that here, indeed, was happiness—unknown to the strained brain-worker, the idle and overfed rich, or the hardly pressed very poor. Young men and women mix freely; they know each other as fellow-workers, members of the same or kindred chapels; they watch each other from childhood upwards, live always in each other's company. They pair naturally, according to well-tested affinity, physical and spiritual. Public opinion—which means religiously guided opinion—presses heavily on the misdoer or the non-worker,—the outcasting process, the reverse of the attracting force of East End life, is seen clearly in this small community, ridding it of the ne'er-do-well and the habitual out-o'-work. There are no attractions for those who have not sources of love and interest within them; no work for those who cannot or will not work constantly. On the other hand, ill-success and unmerited failure are dealt with gently—for these people are, in the main, thinking of another world, and judge people not according to the position they have scrambled into in this, but according to their place in a future Heaven—won by godliness and self-renunciation.

Overtime brings needless waste of strength, taking more from the worker and giving less to the employer. It means an existence of physical drudgery, wearing out the body and rusting out the mind. It leaves men with no appetite for food and a strong desire for drink—brutalises them by unfitting them for social intercourse or common interest.

This class eats too little, and above all, sleeps too little—

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growing boys getting only six or seven hours' bed; and the unfortunate mother who calls them lying awake half the night so as to be in time, and sitting up for the latest and oldest to get to bed. But overtime is forbidden for women and children—and it is here that one sees the benefit of the Factory Acts, and consequent inspection. *Laisser-faire* breaks down, when one watches these things from the inside. The individual worker cannot refuse to work overtime—if he does he loses his employment. Neither does he always wish to refuse, for many are ignorant of the meaning of constant strain on future life. It is idle to say that this bad effect of overwork is not restricted to manual labour; but is more felt by brain-workers. True, but in one case the remedy is easy to administer, in another impossible. Factories are easily stopped—briefs, consultations and literary study cannot be checked. Perhaps it would be far happier if they could be. [MS. diary, October 1886.]

### *Letters to my Father, October 1886*

[*First Letter*].—I should have written to you before, but I have had a wretched cold in my head, which has made me feel stupid. I nearly always have a cold once a year and generally about this time, but it is unfortunate that it should come in this visit. Still, it has not been bad enough to prevent me from going out among the people. Mrs. Aked, with whom I am staying, is a jolly little Yorkshire widow, delighted with an excuse for going again into "company," so we spend most of our time in and out of the neighbours' cottages, and very old friends insist on entertaining me. I can assure you "Miss Jones" is a very popular person; and her London experiences draw quite an audience in the cottages in which she takes her "tiffin." . . . I am more and more charmed with the life of these people; with their warm-hearted integrity and power to act together. I suppose they are more or less a picked people from among the working class; if not, this section of the working class are more refined in their motives and feelings than the majority of the money-getting or money-inheriting class. There is a total absence of vulgarity; no attempt to seem what they are not, or to struggle and strive to be better off than their neighbours. Then, it is the only society I have ever lived in, in which religious faith really guides thought

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and action, and forms the basis to the whole life of the individual and the community.

The religious socialism of the dissenting communities is very remarkable, each circle forming a "law unto itself" to which the individual must submit or be an outcast. And as all the denominations work heartily together (except the Church, which has here, on account of an ill-conducted parson, a contemptible position), the censorship on private morality is very severe, and a man or a woman cannot well escape it without leaving Bacup. One sees here the other side of the process through which bad workmen and bad characters are attracted to the large town. In East End life one notices this attraction, here one can watch the outcasting force. In the first place, there are no odd jobs in a small community which depends on productive industries. Unless a man can work regularly he cannot work at all. Then a bad character is socially an outcast, the whole social life depending on the chapel and the "Co-op."

The "Co-op." furnishes amusement and interest, free of expense to all members, and through the system of deposit accounts, a mutual insurance company. Trade unionism is not strong here; class spirit hardly exists because there is no capitalist class; those mills which are not companies being owned by quite small men of working-class origin and connected with working people. Then, as a great many working people have shares in the co-operative mills, there is a recognised desire to keep down wages, which reacts on the public opinion, and makes even the non-owning men take a fairer view of the employer's position.

Three or four mill-hands were smoking here yesterday (my cigarettes!) and they were saying that the workers were getting the best of the bargain just at present. There is no bitter, uneasy feeling among the inhabitants of Bacup, for there is practically social equality; perhaps this accounts for the total absence of vulgarity. But one wonders what will happen when the religious feeling of the people is undermined by advancing scientific culture; for though the "Co-op." and the chapel at present work together, the secularism of the "Co-op." is half unconsciously recognised by earnest chapel-goers as a rival attraction to the prayer meeting and the Bible class. One won-

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ders where all the *feeling* will go, and all the capacity for *moral* self-government.

I think the safeguard will be in a strong local government, with considerable power to check individual action; and of a sufficiently small area to allow of the working people taking a real everyday part, and not only at election times. For the active regulation of their own and their neighbours' lives will be far less dangerous than theorising and talking about things of which they have no knowledge. They have been trained to *act* but not to *think*—and in talking over “imperial politics” they do not show much intelligence—for their one leading idea seems to be to cut down salaries!

Labouchere seems the principal favourite—a man they would not tolerate as a “Co-op.” or “chapel” leader.

I am glad to say the better class stick to Mr. Chamberlain [my father was an ardent “Unionist”]. The G.O.M. has sadly gone down since I was last here—some good Liberals saying openly that he is in his dotage.

To-morrow, if my cold is well enough, I am going to Manchester with the draper's daughter to buy goods from the Manchester warehouseman. Ask Mary to let me know how you got over your journey; my address is Miss Jones, 5 Angel Street, Tony Lane, Bacup.

[*Second Letter*].—This is my last day here, as I am not going on to Oldham; the weather is so raw and disagreeable and I cannot get rid of my cold. I must tell you something about our daily life.

It begins at 5.30 with Mrs. Aked's pleasant voice: “Willie, Willie, be sharp, first bell's rung.” Willie is the youngest son, a pretty blue-eyed youth who “favours” Grandmamma Heyworth. He is tenter to a sheet weaver; is fifteen years old and earns five shillings. The last week his wages have been pulled down to four shillings and ninepence and he threatens to strike off work, but his mother tells him if he does he shall be “without money.” Titus (the oldest) is off to work the same time (to the Keld' (*sic*) manufacture) and his mother gives them both a “cup of tea” before they leave. Then the good little woman sits down to her Bible and struggles through her chapter

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(she is no scholar) until it is time for Walter to get off to his work (eight o'clock) at the "Co-op." shop. He is a dull, heavy boy, whose chief interest is in his smart ties. We breakfast at 8.30, Titus and a fellow-worker joining us—bread and butter and tea-cake and good strong tea. Titus is a good, sensible lad, very fond of music and still fonder of "his woman"—reads a good many "Co-op." books on science, and wins prizes at the night schools. The fellow-worker is an unmarried woman of thirty-seven, who says in a cheery way that "she's had her chance a' lost it, and canna look for another" (in which sentiment I sympathise!).

Yesterday, I put a shawl over my head and went off with her to the mill—stayed an hour or so chatting with the hands while they worked. They are a happy lot of people—quiet workers and very sociable—men and women mixing together in a free-and-easy manner—but without any coarseness that I can see; the masculine sentiment about marriage being "that a man's got no friend until he's a woman of his own." Parties of young men and women go off together for a week to Blackpool, sometimes on cheap trips to London—and as the women earn as much or nearly as much as the men (except the skilled work) there is no assumption of masculine superiority. Certainly this regular mechanical work, with all the invigorating brightness of machines, and plenty of fellow-workers of both sexes, seems about the happiest lot for a human being—so long as the hours are not too long. The factory inspectors keep a sharp look-out on "overtime" for women and children; and this week two masters were fined forty pounds and costs. There is a strong feeling among the hands that overtime ought to be stopped for the men; and I think it would be better if it were. Latterly Titus has worked on till eight o'clock, and looks thoroughly worn out. It seems to waste their strength compared to the amount of work they do extra, and changes an existence of wholesome exertion into wearisome drudgery. Yesterday I went to middle-day meal with my old friend Alice Ashworth—an ugly, rough, warm-hearted single woman of forty, daughter to the delightful old puritan (now dead) we stayed with last time. Poor Alice lives alone in a two-roomed cottage, works at the mill, and has nothing but the memory of her father (who



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was a leader in all good things) and her strong religious feeling to warm the desolate loneliness of her life. "Set ye down in the vacant chair, Miss Jones [after a hearty embrace]; it does me good to see any one who loved my father"; and her ugly rough features were lit up with strong feeling. She talks the broadest "Lankey," sometimes I cannot understand her—and her language is Biblical—all her simplest ideas illustrated with Bible texts. She is devoted to me, looks upon me with quite a wondering admiration, and yet with a strong fellow-feeling of another "lonesome" working woman. It was a high day for Alice, for she had asked the chapel minister and other friends of former days to meet me at tea. The minister, one of the "new college men," with measured phrases and long words; a poor exchange for the old-fashioned minister "called of God from among the people," no more educated than his fellows but rising to leadership by force of character. This man is more of a politician than a preacher—a politician of the shallowest and most unreal type, using endless words and not touching facts. He has a certain influence over the people, through his gift of the gab; but even they half unconsciously feel that the "real thing" is passing away, and grieve that there [are] "na more plain men as *feel* the word of Christ." He is a snob into the bargain, and talks of Stephen Gladstone as if he were his most intimate friend—but then he is not of "Lankey" breed—he is a Welshman. His wife and sister-in-law are of the shabby genteel—aping the ways of the leisured class. Watching him among a large company of simple-minded, clear-headed mill-hands, mal-using his long words and affectedly twisting his hands, one felt the presence of the "inferior animal," and dreaded the making of others of the like pattern by the shallow intellectualism of "higher education."

But I have got off the "order of the day!"

We generally dine at home off mutton and potatoes, and have gone out "a tayin'" every day. That means going about three o'clock and staying until nine, sometimes the whole party adjoining to another cottage.

The people are wonderfully friendly—the cottages comfortable and well furnished, and the teas excellent. Of course the living is trying to any one unaccustomed to a farinaceous diet, and

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after a certain time the conversation would become wearisome to our restless, excited minds, always searching after new things. Still, living actually with these people has given me an insight, that is difficult to express in words, into higher working-class life—with all its charm of direct thinking, honest work and warm feeling; and above all, taught me the real part played by religion in making the English people, and of dissent teaching them the art of self-government, or rather serving as a means to develop their capacity for it. It saddens one to think that the religious faith that has united them together with a strong bond of spiritual effort and sustained them individually, throwing its warmth of light into the more lonely and unloved lives, is destined to pass away. For with their lives of mechanical work—with the many chances of breakdown and failure meaning absence of physical comfort, they need more than intellectualism—more than any form of “high thinking,” which, even if it were worth anything to those who have it, is beyond the reach of these people from their lack of physical energy.

Intellectual culture is a relaxation to the more active-minded and successful, but it cannot be a resting-place to the worn-out or failed lives. “Life in Christ” and hope in another world bring ease and refinement into a more struggle for existence, calming the restless craving after the good things of this world by an “other worldliness,” and making failure a “means of grace” instead of despicable want of success.

Poor Mary ! who has had to read this letter to you !

On the last evening of my second visit I told my gentle cousins who I was. I feared they would be offended: on the contrary, they were delighted, and glad I had not told them before they had got to know me.

The Akeds, mother and son, have been staying with me [I write a year afterwards]. They are simple, true-hearted people, strong Christians; I love these Lancashire folk. I showed them all over London; the one thing they delighted in was the endless galleries of books in the British Museum [the iron galleries where the books are stored]. Olive Schreiner [author of the *South*

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*African Farm*] was staying here; she is a wonderfully attractive little woman brimming over with sympathy. Titus Aked lost his heart to her; her charm of manner and conversation bowled over the simple-hearted Lancashire laddie, with his straight and narrow understanding. He gazed at the wee little woman with reverence and tenderness, and listened intently to every word she said. [MS. diary, October 4, 1887.]

Among my dear old friends [I write when visiting Bacup in 1889], with their kindly simplicity. Cousin Titus is now married to a young girl of sweet and modest expression and gentle ways, a fellow-worker at the mill. Most days she works with him; but often takes a day off and engages a "knitter" [? word illegible] to do her work. Titus reads newspapers and periodicals, and takes music lessons, and attends the mechanics' institute. The young wife spends her spare time in visiting and needlework, and does not attempt "higher interests." But she is full of kindness and affection for her mother-in-law, and fairly worships her Titus. . . . [MS. diary, Bacup, April 1889.]

. . . When I was at Bacup [I meditate after my first visit] I felt as if I were living through a page of puritan history; felt that I saw the actual thing, human beings governed by one idea; devotion to Christ, with no struggle or thought about the world; in every action of their daily life living unto God. And I realised the strength of the motive which enlightened persons believe is passing away. I realised the permeating influence, and wondered what would fill the void it would leave, what inspiring motive would take its place? [MS. diary, February 1884.]

The Bacup adventure gave a decisive turn to my self-development.

Every day actual observation of men and things takes the place of accumulation of facts from books and boudoir trains of thought. Undoubtedly the Bacup trip is the right direction. To profit by that kind of observation I must gain more knowledge of legal and commercial matters, understand the theory of government before I can appreciate deficiencies in practice. The

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time is come now for a defined object towards which all my energies must be bent. [MS. diary, January 24, 1884.]

The die was cast, the craft was chosen. Through the pressure of circumstances and the inspiration of the time-spirit, I had decided to become an investigator of social institutions.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIELD OF CONTROVERSY

THE decisive influence of social environment on the activities of the individual was in my case even more immediate and obvious in the selection of a subject for investigation than in the choice of a craft.

Why did I select the chronic destitution of whole sections of the people, whether illustrated by overcrowded homes, by the demoralised casual labour at the docks, or by the low wages, long hours and insanitary conditions of the sweated industries, as the first subject for enquiry? Unlike my sister Kate, who had toiled for six years as a volunteer rent-collector, I was not led into the homes of the poor by the spirit of charity. I had never been moved by the "hard cases" which, as I thought, "make bad law." What impelled me to concentrate on the condition of the people as the immediate question for investigation was the state of mind in the most vital centres of business enterprise, of political agitation and of academic reasoning.

There were, in fact, in the 'eighties and 'nineties two controversies raging in periodicals and books, and giving rise to perpetual argument within my own circle of relations and acquaintances: on the one hand, the meaning of the poverty of masses of men; and, on the other, the practicability and desirability of political and industrial democracy as a set-off to, perhaps as a means of redressing, the grievances of the majority of the people. Was the poverty of the many a necessary condition of the wealth of the nation and of its progress in civilisation? And if the bulk of the people

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were to remain poor and uneducated, was it desirable, was it even safe, to entrust them with the weapon of trade unionism, and, through the ballot-box, with making and controlling the Government of Great Britain with its enormous wealth and its far-flung dominions ?

In the first chapter of this book I described how, in my childhood and youth, the outlook of the family circle, though unusually extended and diversified, did not include the "world of Labour." I described how "the very term 'Labour' stood for an abstraction—for an arithmetically calculable mass of human beings, each individual being merely a repetition of the others." . . . "Water plentiful and labour docile was a typical sentence in a company-promoter's report."

Owing to a shifting in business and family relationships, reinforced by the transformation in British public opinion presently to be described, this closed eye came to be opened, and opened widely. In 1879 my father resigned the presidency of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada, which he had held for ten years, and became once more actively engaged in British business enterprises. To an alien railway administrator, speeding over the vast spaces of a continent that was steadily filling up with immigrants of all races, white and yellow, brown and black, the conception of the manual workers as so many "Robots" was natural, perhaps inevitable. To the manufacturer or merchant of Great Britain, as to the financiers standing behind them, faced as they were in 1879-85 by lock-outs and strikes conducted by Trade Unions of undeniable power; having to meet in official relations the workmen leaders, not only as negotiators on equal terms, but also as members of the House of Commons, even, in 1885, as part of the Administration—the term "Labour" had come to mean no abstrac-

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tion at all, but a multitude of restless, self-assertive, and loss-creating fellow-citizens, who could no longer be ignored and therefore had to be studied. Hence there began to appear on my mother's boudoir table, pamphlets and treatises for and against the Wage-Fund Theory; whilst my father, with a puzzled expression, sought enlightenment from Carlyle's *Past and Present*, and began to take an interest in the experiences (as a volunteer rent-collector in the East End of London) of his daughter Kate, and in the conversation of such co-workers, thus introduced into the family circle, as Octavia Hill and Samuel and Henrietta Barnett. Moreover, it happened to be during these years that three political-minded brothers-in-law joined the family group. There was Henry Hobhouse (afterwards one of the members for Somerset and the Chairman of its County Council and Quarter-Sessions), who married my sister Margaret in 1880, and brought with him the cultivated refinement and sense of social obligation characteristic of such country gentlemen and public-service families as the Hobhouses, Farrers, Aclands and Stracheys. There was Charles Alfred Cripps, who married my sister Theresa in 1881; a brilliantly successful young barrister, an accomplished dialectician, with a tolerant and benevolent outlook on life; in after years destined to become a Conservative M.P., and eventually, as Lord Parmoor, owing to his hatred of war and distrust of "capitalist imperialism," to swing into sympathy with the Labour and Socialist Movement, and to enter the short-lived Labour Cabinet of 1924. I delighted in arguments with him. And, last to join us, but eldest and most influential of the trio, Leonard Courtney, then Financial Secretary to the Treasury in Gladstone's Administration, won my sister Kate from her philanthropic work in 1883, and brought to bear on our discussions a massive intelligence

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and an amazing memory, combined with the intellectual integrity and personal disinterestedness of a superman. He and my sister, with a wide circle of political and literary friends, made a new centre of light and leading to the whole family. Of more immediate significance to myself was my deepened friendship with my cousin Mary Booth and with her husband Charles Booth, whose outstanding enquiry into the life and labour of the people of London I describe in the following chapter. All these stimulating personalities were so many "live wires" connecting me with the larger worlds of politics, philanthropy and statistical investigation in these very years subjected to the working of a new ferment of thought and feeling.

## THE WORLD OF POLITICS

"What is outside Parliament," wrote Mr. Gladstone to Lord Rosebery in the first year of the triumphant Gladstonian Government of 1880-1885, "seems to me to be fast mounting—nay, to have already mounted—to an importance much exceeding what is inside."<sup>1</sup>

The new ferment was, in fact, barely discernible in the proceedings of the House of Commons directed by the Gladstonian Cabinet of 1880-1885. For half a century British politics had been based on a continuous rivalry between Whig and Tory; between landlordism on the one hand, rooted in privilege and protection, and on the other, capitalism claiming unrestricted freedom of enterprise in pursuit of pecuniary profit. To these must be added the distinct but parallel conflict between Nonconformity and the Established Church. From time to time there had

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone to Lord Rosebery, September 16, 1880. Quoted in *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, by John Morley, vol. iii. p. 4.



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arisen a demand for a further extension of the suffrage, and hot had been the disputes between the two great parties as to the exact amount of property or degree of social position necessary to fit a man for the exercise of the suffrage, and as to the devices that might be invented for curbing the power of majorities.

Now it was these old forces that were, in the main, represented by the House of Commons elected in 1880. For it must be remembered that the general election of that year had turned almost entirely on an emotional, even 'a religious view, of foreign affairs, to the exclusion of domestic issues, save for a repugnance to any increase in public expenditure and a desire for an actual reduction of taxation. Partly owing to this lack of lead, and partly to sheer bad luck, this Parliament failed altogether to control its own destinies, and floundered in the bogs of Bradlaughism, Ireland, the Transvaal, and Egypt—all of them issues remote from the needs and thoughts of the British electorate. Yet, as Gladstone had realised, there were already portents of politics of a new type. Lord Randolph Churchill, with his queerly assorted three fellow-benchers, Arthur Balfour, Drummond Wolff and John Gorst, was feverishly stimulating the organisation of the Tory working men into a ubiquitous electoral network which would enable him, from time to time, to shake his fist at Lord Salisbury. And there was Joseph Chamberlain, already controlling a powerful Radical caucus, who had administered Birmingham on the bold principle of "high rates and a healthy city," and who was now talking of taxation as a ransom due from those "who toil not neither do they spin," and who was demanding, in his new rôle of Cabinet Minister, adult manhood suffrage, free secular education, and three acres and a cow for those who preferred individual production on the land

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to work at wages in the mine or factory. "There is a process of slow modification and development mainly in directions which I view with misgiving," wrote the veteran statesman to Lord Acton in February 1885. " 'Tory Democracy,' the favourite idea on that side, is no more like the Conservative Party in which I was bred than it is like Liberalism. In fact less. It is demagogism; only a demagogism not ennobled by love and appreciation of liberty, but applied in the worst way, to put down the pacific, law-respecting, economic elements which ennobled the old Conservatism; living on the fomentation of angry passions, and still, in secret, as obstinately attached as ever to the evil principle of class interests. The Liberalism of to-day is better in what I have described as ennobling the old Conservatism: nay much better, yet far from being good. Its pet idea is what they call construction, that is to say, taking into the hands of the State the business of the individual man. Both the one and the other have much to estrange me, and have had for many, many years."<sup>1</sup> It was this demoniacal constructiveness that a few years later the aged and weary leader anathematised as "whole vistas of social quackery."

Why this demand for State intervention from a generation reared amidst rapidly rising riches and disciplined in the school of philosophic radicalism and orthodox political economy? For it was not the sweated workers, massed in

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone to Lord Acton, February 11, 1885. *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, by John Morley, 1903, vol. iii. pp. 172-3. As early as 1877 Goschen, in the House of Commons, speaking as a Cabinet Minister, declared: "It might be an unpopular thing to say it, but Political Economy had been de-throned in that House and Philanthropy had been allowed to take its place" [*Life of Lord Goschen*, by A. D. Elliot (1911), vol. i. p. 163].

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overcrowded city tenements or scattered, as agricultural labourers and home workers, in village hovels; it was not the so-called aristocracy of labour—the cotton operatives, engineers and miners, who were, during this period, enrolling themselves in friendly societies, organising Trade Unions, and managing their own co-operative stores—it was, in truth, no section of the manual workers that was secreting what Mr. Asquith lived to denounce in the 1924 election as “the poison of socialism.” The working-class revolt against the misery and humiliation brought about by the Industrial Revolution—a revolt, in spasmodic violence, aping revolution—had had its fling in the ’twenties and ’thirties and its apotheosis in the Chartist Movement of the ’forties. During the relative prosperity of the ’fifties and ’sixties the revolutionary tradition of the first decades of the nineteenth century faded away; and by 1880 it had become little more than a romantic memory among old men in their anecdotage. Born and bred in chronic destitution and enfeebling disease, the denizens of the slums had sunk into a brutalised apathy, whilst the more fortunate members of skilled occupations, entrenched in craft unionism, had been converted to the “administrative nihilism” of Cobden, Bright and Bradlaugh.

The origin of the ferment is to be discovered in a new consciousness of sin among men of intellect and men of property; a consciousness at first philanthropic and practical—Oastler, Shaftesbury and Chadwick; then literary and artistic—Dickens, Carlyle, Ruskin and William Morris; and finally, analytic, historical and explanatory—in his latter days John Stuart Mill;<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and his English

<sup>1</sup> In his *Autobiography* (The World's Classics Edition, pp. 195–6) John Stuart Mill thus describes his conversion to socialism. “In those days I had seen little further than the old school

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interpreters; Alfred Russel Wallace and Henry George; Arnold Toynbee and the Fabians. I might perhaps add a theological category—Charles Kingsley, F. D. Maurice, General Booth and Cardinal Manning. “The sense of sin has been the starting-point of progress” was, during of political economists into the possibilities of fundamental improvement in social arrangements. Private property, as now understood, and inheritance, appeared to me, as to them, the *dernier mot* of legislation: and I looked no further than to mitigating the inequalities consequent on these institutions, by getting rid of primogeniture and entails. The notion that it was possible to go further than this in removing the injustice—for injustice it is, whether admitting of a complete remedy or not—involved in the fact that some are born to riches and the vast majority to poverty, I then reckoned chimerical, and only hoped that by universal education, leading to voluntary restraint on population, the portion of the poor might be made more tolerable. In short, I was a democrat, but not the least of a Socialist. We [Mill and his wife] were now much less democrats than I had been, because so long as education continues to be so wretchedly imperfect, we dreaded the ignorance and especially the selfishness and brutality of the mass: but our ideal of ultimate improvement went far beyond Democracy, and would class us decidedly under the general designation of Socialists. While we repudiated with the greatest energy that tyranny of society over the individual which most Socialist systems are supposed to involve, we yet looked forward to a time when society will no longer be divided into the idle and the industrious; when the rule that they who do not work, shall not eat, will be applied not to paupers only, but impartially to all; when the division of the produce of labour, instead of depending, as in so great a degree it now does, on the accident of birth, will be made by concert on an acknowledged principle of justice; and when it will no longer either be, or be thought to be, impossible for human beings to exert themselves strenuously in procuring benefits which are not to be exclusively their own, but to be shared with the society they belong to.” The sentence that follows I put in italics as it contains John Stuart Mill’s pregnant definition of socialism. “*The social problem of the future we consider to be, how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour.*”

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these years, the oft-repeated saying of Samuel Barnett, rector of St. Jude's, Whitechapel, and founder of Toynbee Hall.

When I say the consciousness of sin, I do not mean the consciousness of personal sin: the agricultural labourers on Lord Shaftesbury's estate were no better off than others in Dorsetshire; Ruskin and William Morris were surrounded in their homes with things which were costly as well as beautiful; John Stuart Mill did not alter his modest but comfortable way of life when he became a Socialist; and H. M. Hyndman gloried in the garments habitual to the members of exclusive West End clubs. The consciousness of sin was a collective or class consciousness; a growing uneasiness, amounting to conviction, that the industrial organisation, which had yielded rent, interest and profits on a stupendous scale, had failed to provide a decent livelihood and tolerable conditions for a majority of the inhabitants of Great Britain. "England," said Carlyle in the 'forties, "is full of wealth, of multifarious produce, supply for human want in every kind; yet England is dying of inanition."<sup>1</sup> "This association of poverty with progress," argued the American advocate of taxation of land values, some forty years later, "is the great enigma of our times. It is the central fact from which spring industrial, social and political difficulties that perplex the world, and with which statesmanship and philanthropy and education grapple in vain. . . . So long as all the increased wealth which modern progress brings goes but to build up great fortunes, to increase luxury and make sharper the contrast between the House of Have and the House of Want, progress is not real and cannot be per-

<sup>1</sup> *Past and Present*, by Thomas Carlyle, p. 1.

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manent. The reaction must come.”<sup>1</sup> “At this very time,” wrote William Morris and H. M. Hyndman in 1884, “official returns prove conclusively that vast masses of our countrymen are living on the very verge of starvation; that much of the factory population is undergoing steady physical deterioration; that the agricultural labourers rarely get enough food to keep them clear of diseases arising from insufficient nourishment; while such is the housing of the wage-earners in our great cities and in our country districts, that even the leading partisans of our political factions at length have awakened to the fact that civilisation for the poor has been impossible for nearly two generations under these conditions, and that some steps ought really to be taken to remedy so monstrous an evil. Drink, debauchery, vice, crime inevitably arise under such conditions. For indigestion arising from bad food, cold arising from insufficient firing, depression arising from unhealthy air and lack of amusement, necessarily drive the poor to the public-house; while even the sober have had, too often, no education which should fit them for the full enjoyment of life. And drunken and sober, virtuous and vicious—if they can be called vicious who are steeped in immorality from their very babyhood—are all subject to never-ceasing uncertainty of earning a livelihood, due to the constant introduction of fresh machines over which they have no control, or the great commercial crises which come more frequently and last for a longer time at each recurrence. There is therefore complete anarchy of life and anarchy of production around us. Order exists, morality exists, comfort, happiness, education, as a whole,

<sup>1</sup> *Progress and Poverty, An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions, and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth—The Remedy*, by Henry George, 1883, pp. 6, 7.

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exist only for the class which has the means of production, at the expense of the class which supplies the labour-force that produces wealth.”<sup>1</sup> “The state of the houses,” declared Cardinal Manning two years later, “families living in single rooms, sometimes many families in one room, a corner apiece—these things cannot go on. The accumulation of wealth in the land, the piling up of wealth like mountains in the possession of classes or of individuals, cannot go on if these moral conditions of our people are not healed. No commonwealth can rest on such foundations.”<sup>2</sup>

This class-consciousness of sin was usually accompanied by devoted personal service, sometimes by open confession and a deliberate dedication of means and strength to the reorganisation of society on a more equalitarian basis. One of the noblest and most original of these latter-day confessors, Arnold Toynbee, expressed, on the eve of his premature death—in words charged, it may be overcharged, with emotion—at once his penitence and his hope for a nobler life for the mass of his fellow-countrymen. “We—the middle classes, I mean, not merely the very rich—we have neglected you; instead of justice we have offered you charity, and instead of sympathy we have offered you hard and unreal advice; but I think we are changing. If you would only believe it and trust us, I think that many of us would spend our lives in your service. You have—I say it clearly and advisedly—you have to forgive us, for we have wronged you; we have sinned against you grievously—not knowingly always, but still

<sup>1</sup> *A Summary of the Principles of Socialism*, by H. M. Hyndman and William Morris, published 1884.

<sup>2</sup> *The Rights of Labour*, by Cardinal Manning, republished and revised in 1887, quoted in *Life of Cardinal Manning*, by Edmund Sheridan Purcell, vol. ii. p. 647.

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we have sinned, and let us confess it; but if you will forgive us—nay, whether you will forgive us or not—we will serve you, we will devote our lives to your service, and we cannot do more. It is not that we care about public life, for what is public life but the miserable, arid waste of barren controversies and personal jealousies, and grievous loss of time? Who would live in public life if he could help it? But we students, we would help you if we could. We are willing to give up something much dearer than fame and social position. We are willing to give up the life we care for, the life with books and with those we love. We will do this, and only ask you to remember one thing in return. We will ask you to remember this—that we work for you, in the hope and trust that if you get material civilisation, if you get a better life, if you have opened up to you the possibility of a better life, you will really lead a better life. If, that is, you get material civilisation, remember that it is not an end in itself. Remember that man, like trees and plants, has his roots in the earth; but like the trees and plants, he must grow upwards towards the heavens. If you will only keep to the love of your fellow-men and to great ideals, then we shall find our happiness in helping you; but if you do not, then our reparation will be in vain.”<sup>1</sup>

Now what infuriated the philosophic individualist, what upset the equanimity of Tory squire, Whig capitalist and Conservative professional man, was not the vicarious conscience of a pious peer or philanthropic employer, it was not the abstract or historical analysis of the industrial

<sup>1</sup> Arnold Toynbee, M.A., on “‘Progress and Poverty’: a Criticism of Mr. Henry George,” being a lecture entitled “Mr. George in England,” delivered January 18, 1883, in St. Andrew’s Hall, Newman Street, London.



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revolution by heterodox thinkers and rhetorical authors, still less the seemingly hysterical outpourings of university dons and sentimental divines; it was the grim fact that each successive administration, whether Whig or Tory, indeed every new session of Parliament, led to further State regulation of private enterprise, to fresh developments of central and municipal administration, and, worst of all, to the steadily increasing taxation of the rich for the benefit of the poor. The reaction against the theory and practice of empirical Socialism came to a head under Mr. Gladstone's administration of 1880-1885, an administration which may be fitly termed the "no man's land" between the old Radicalism and the new Socialism. For this ministry of all the talents wandered in and out of the trenches of the old individualists and the scouting parties of the new Socialists with an "absence of mind" concerning social and economic questions that became, in the following decades, the characteristic feature of Liberal statesmanship. Hence it was neither in Parliament nor in the Cabinet that the battle of the empirical Socialists with the philosophic Radicals was fought and won. Though the slow but continuous retreat of the individualist forces was signalled by annual increments of Socialistic legislation and administration, the controversy was carried out in periodicals, pamphlets, books, and in the evidence and reports of Royal Commissions and Government committees of enquiry.

Foremost at that time among the literary defenders of the existing order—shall I say the passing order?—was my old friend Herbert Spencer, in the early 'eighties at the zenith of his world-fame as England's greatest philosopher. Under challenging titles—*The Sins of Legislators*, *The New Toryism*, *The Coming Slavery*, and *The Great Political*

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*Superstition*—he contributed a series of articles in the *Contemporary Review* of 1884, published a few months later in *Man versus The State*, in which he ingeniously combined a destructive analysis of current legislation and a deductive demonstration of the validity of individualist economics and ethics, with a slashing attack on the Liberal party for having forsworn its faith in personal freedom. The gist of his indictment can best be given in his own words: "Dictatorial measures, rapidly multiplied, have tended continually to narrow the liberties of individuals; and have done this in a double way. Regulations have been made in yearly growing numbers, restraining the citizen in directions where his actions were previously unchecked, and compelling actions which previously he might perform or not as he liked; and at the same time, heavier public burdens, chiefly local, have further restricted his freedom, by lessening that portion of his earnings which he can spend as he pleases, and augmenting the portion taken from him to be spent as public agents please. . . . Thus, either directly or indirectly, and in most cases both at once, the citizen is at each further stage in the growth of this compulsory legislation, deprived of some liberty which he previously had.<sup>1</sup> . . . How is it," asks the indignant philosopher, "that Liberalism, getting more and more into power, had grown more and more coercive in its legislation? How is it that, either directly through its own majorities or indirectly through aid given

<sup>1</sup> I quote from the revised edition included in the volume entitled *Social Statics, Abridged and Revised; together with The Man versus The State*, by Herbert Spencer, 1892, pp. 271 and 290. In the introduction to this reprint, Spencer notes that as far back as 1860 he had foreseen the trend towards Socialism inherent in political democracy. [*Westminster Review*, April 1860.]

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in such cases to the majorities of its opponents, Liberalism has to an increasing extent adopted the policy of dictating the actions of citizens, and, by consequence diminishing the range throughout which their actions remain free? How are we to explain this spreading confusion of thought which has led it, in pursuit of what appears to be public good, to invert the method by which in earlier days it achieved public good?" Then he defines the distinctive policies of Whig and Tory parties throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: "If we compare these descriptions, we see that in the one party there was a desire to resist and decrease the coercive power of the ruler over the subject, and in the other party to maintain or increase his coercive power. This distinction in their aims—a distinction which transcends in meaning and importance all other political distinctions—was displayed in their early doings." And this degeneration of Liberalism the philosopher attributes to a mistaken belief in the validity of democratic institutions. "The great political superstition of the past was the divine right of kings. The great political superstition of the present is the divine right of parliaments. The oil of anointing seems unawares to have dripped from the head of the one on to the heads of the many, and given sacredness to them also and to their decrees."... "The function of Liberalism in the past was that of putting a limit to the powers of kings. The function of true Liberalism in the future will be that of putting a limit to the powers of parliaments."<sup>1</sup>

Alas! poor Liberals! The outraged survivors of philosophic Radicalism were far more eager to drive the

<sup>1</sup> *Man versus The State*, pp. 277, 279, 369, 403.

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Gladstonians back into the rear-trenches of what was assumed to be orthodox political economy than to stop the advancing scouts of the tiny sect of Socialists. Indeed, these rival fanatics became the pets of Conservative drawing-rooms and the sought-for opponents on individualist platforms. "Anyway, I declare that I positively look forward with pleasure to the day when Lewin's Socialists will increase in numbers and power," says the cynical mugwump M.P. in Auberon Herbert's brilliant symposium, *A Politician in Trouble about his Soul*. "It will be refreshing to escape, even by their help, from this atmosphere of perfumed lying. The real Socialists—I don't mean any of the half-breeds, the Tory democrats, or the Gladstonites, or the Christian *sans-culottes*, or whatever they call themselves—have convictions, even if they are of the 'blood and iron' kind. I should feel it a true pleasure to be shot by a genuine Socialist—or to shoot him, as the matter might turn out—if only in return we might be quit of the modern politician, who smirks and bows like the draper's assistant, while he cheats us out of an inch in every yard. Only, may it please the Lord to shorten the time and deliver us from this universal sloppiness! If 'justice as our guide,' generosity, and 'gracious messages' may be consigned once for all to the rhetorical dust-hole, I shall breathe freely again, and feel grateful to the men who say in a straightforward dialect, 'You are the few, we are the many; we have the force, and we intend to have the enjoyment. Do you keep, if you can; and we will take, if we can.'"<sup>1</sup>

And here I venture on an interlude—an entry in my diary

<sup>1</sup> *A Politician in Trouble about his Soul*, by Auberon Herbert, pp. 183-4 (1884).

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(an irrelevance, corrects *The Other One*) descriptive of Auberon Herbert<sup>1</sup> at home in the New Forest.

Across the forest and the moor we rode on that February day; the man and the elder girl and I to the home in the wilds. . . . From the forest glade the ground slopes gently to a boggy boundary separating the meadow from a vast expanse of moor. Round about reigns solitude. The rough forest pony, the picturesque Channel Isle cattle, and the wild deer, roam with equal freedom on the common land; but the wooden fence bars them from the sacred precincts of a forest freehold. On the highest part of this ground stands a little colony of queer red-painted buildings; two large cottages and various small outhouses, huddled together indistinct from one another and free from any architectural plan. No attempt at a drive or even a path, not even a gate. To enter the enclosure the visitor must needs dip under a wooden paling. But once inside the larger cottage, there is comfort, even taste. The floors are bare and clean scoured; here and there warm-coloured rugs thrown across, while the monotony of the wooden wall is broken by draped Eastern hangings. In the dining-room the old forest hearth, bringing with it commoners' rights, stands intact: the only part of the "Old House," still the name of the colony, left unchanged; it forms a half circle, the chimney arising straight from the stone hearth whereon a mass of peat and wood burns brightly. Another sitting-room, a guest-chamber, the kitchen and pantry on either side of the entrance, complete the rooms on the ground floor. Above, three bedrooms and the family sitting-room—this latter gable shape, with a ladder leading on to the roof. There is comfort, even elegance, though a lack of finish, and a certain roughness which has its own charm. Refined eccentricity, not poverty, lives here. The outhouses clustering round the larger

<sup>1</sup> Auberon Herbert, 1838–1906: third son of third Earl of Carnarvon. Conservative candidate for Isle of Wight, 1865; Liberal candidate for Berkshire, 1868; elected for Nottingham, 1870; retired, 1874. One of Herbert Spencer's three trustees. Besides *A Politician in Trouble about his Soul*, his principal publications were: *The Sacrifice of Education in Examination*, 1889; *A Plea for Liberty*, 1891; *The Right and Wrong of Compulsion by the State*, 1885; *A Voluntarist Creed*, 1908.

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cottages are still unfinished. Five ponies of all sorts and conditions, safely termed "screws," stand in the stalls, and a shaggy Shetland wanders in the meadow. I think there are cows, but these are out in the forest during the day. Happily, no cocks and hens to break the silence. A mangy dog, a time-worn retriever, and three or four lively, well-fed cats compose the rest of the live stock. In the smaller cottage live three maid-servants; two men, formerly "Shakers," serve in all capacities, for ponies, cows, drawing of water, hewing of wood, and as messengers to the civilised world.

Auberon Herbert, head of this little home, is a tall stooping man; he is already grey though only fifty years of age; and the look of failing physical strength is stamped on face and figure. His bearing, manner, voice—all tell the courtesy and sensitiveness of good breeding; his expression is that of an intellectual dreamer, tempered by the love of his fellow-creatures, whether human or otherwise; and in the truthful sympathy of his grey eyes and in the lines of his face you read past suffering and present resignation. The younger son of a great English peer, he was brought up to the amusements and occupations of his own class: public school, university, army, sport and racing, and, lastly, politics, followed in quick succession, with the always-present background of big country houses and sparkling London drawing-rooms. But his choice was not there. He married a woman of his own caste and, strangely enough, sharing his own tastes, and these two refused to move in the grooves of aristocratic custom. They settled down in a country farm and carved life out according to their own conscience. Strange stories floated up to London Society of their doings: Shaker settlements, gipsy vans, spirit-rapping and medium-hunting; and, worst of all, eating with their own servants! Now and again the literary world was charmed by brilliant articles in the *Fortnightly* or letters in the *Times*, and the political set was flustered and amused by the outspoken and well-worded dialogue, *A Politician in Trouble about his Soul*; which actually seemed written for the purpose of disproving the usefulness of the politician! But generally Auberon Herbert was looked upon as an enthusiast, a Don Quixote of the nineteenth century, who had left the real battle of life to fight a strange ogre of his own imagination—an *always*

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*immoral State interference*: a creature, the uncouthness of whose name was a sufficient guarantee for its non-existence.

Now the loved companion is dead. Two little girls, one thirteen and the other seven, a boy away at a grammar school, are the beloved of the solitary man. Both the girls are dressed in grey smocks, worsted stockings, and thick clump boots. The elder is largely and loosely made, with a warm complexion, dark eyes, and constantly changing expression; sometimes awkward plainness, at other times bright beauty; at all times a simplicity and directness and ready sympathy, attracting love. The younger is a quick, grey-eyed, phlegmatic-tempered child, with compressed mouth and decided little ways; a toss of the head and a sparkle of the eye speaking decision and purpose of character. A young Oxford man, pleasant, fairly intelligent, but in no way out-of-the-common, lives in the house as tutor. Here in the midst of great natural beauty, far away from all human intercourse, these three lives slip slowly onward; the man towards old age and death, the girls towards the joys and the troubles, the risks and burdens of mature womanhood. . . .

After our long ride, fourteen miles round about from the station, we were tired. Lunch over, we sank into comfortable chairs round the blaze of peat and wood fire, sipped coffee, and smoked cigarettes. Religiously minded individualism disputing with scientific fact-finding; discordant tendencies, it is true, but mutually tolerant. "A woman without a soul," said Auberon Herbert playfully, "looking upon struggling society as a young surgeon looks on a case as another subject for diagnosis. Cannot you see it is moral law that should guide our action; and that the only moral axiom in social life is free action for every man's faculties?" [MS. diary, February 8, 1888.]

Another two days with Auberon Herbert in the New Forest [I write nine months later]. Long talks with him riding through the tangled forest groves or by the peat fire in his small attic sanctum, these latter lasting far into the night. The same gentle-natured well-bred man, but new lights on his character bringing out weaker qualities. "All through my life I have formed sudden fancies, I have been wrapped up in a man or woman and then discovered some imperfection and turned from them. I

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am perpetually seeking the ideal and as perpetually being disappointed. Like all idealists I am a little inhuman."

There is a touch of egotism in his eccentric life; unwillingness to bear the burdens of everyday existence. And his career proves the impossibility of influencing men without constant contact; even to me (a woman!) his proposals seem manifestly absurd in inadequacy of means to ends. All the same, he has an attractive and highly original personality, touching heights of moral beauty but showing sometimes a ground-work of self-deceiving egotism. There is a want of masculine qualities, of healthy sturdiness. It is only the transparent honesty of his nature and the absence of "earthiness" that prevent this weakness from leading to morbid and untrue feeling.

I enjoyed the rides and scenery, and the constant companionship with a refined and highly intellectual man, and his idealism is refreshing—I wish to believe it is true. [MS. diary, December 14, 1888.]

So far as I was concerned, the net effect of this dialectical duel between the philosophic Radical and the Socialist or socialistically minded politician is best described in a letter which I drafted to a London acquaintance—a letter which apparently I lacked the courage to send, as it remains unfinished, undated and unsigned in the MS. diary of July 1884. To-day, forty years afterwards, this presumptuous and, I fear, priggish pronouncement has incidentally the merit of demonstrating the anti-democratic and anti-collectivist bias with which I started out to investigate the working of social institutions.

I send you *Man versus The State*. I feel very penitent for talking to you on social subjects, which I do not, and never hope to, understand. Nevertheless, it is very distressing to be reduced to a state of absolute agnosticism on all questions, divine and human; and that state appears to me nowadays the fate of the ordinary mortal born with an intellectual tendency.

Social questions would seem to me to require for their solution greater intellectual power and more freedom from bias than the problems of other sciences—and I do not quite understand the



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democratic theory that by multiplying ignorant opinions indefinitely you produce wisdom ! I know the democrat would answer : " The political instincts of the masses are truer than the political theories of the wise men." But if we approach this great idol " the majority " and examine the minds of those individuals of it who are within our reach, we find them roughly divided into three classes : those who are indifferent—whose nervous energy is absorbed in the struggle for existence and well-being ; those who accept political opinions as a party faith without really understanding the words they use : and lastly, that more promising material, politically considered, that large section of the working classes who are passionately discontented with things as they are and desirous to obtain what they would consider a *fairer* share of the good things of this world. But we all agree that there are laws governing distribution, though we may differ as to their nature.

Are these discontented men, anxious for immediate relief, *likely* to arrive at the truth about these laws ? Would desperate anxiety to relieve pain teach the patient or his friend the medicine likely to affect it—if they had no knowledge of medicine ?

Certainly, if one judges the political intelligence of the masses by the speeches addressed to it by party speakers, especially the speeches of those most successful in pleasing it—one cannot estimate it very highly.

What body of scientific men, or even of ordinary shrewd business men, spoken to on the subject that interested them most, whether intellectually or materially, would *tolerate* that extraordinary mixture of personalities, dogmatic assertions as to fact and principle, metaphysical theories, grand and vague moral sentiments, appeals to personal devotion on the one hand, and self-interest on the other, this extraordinary medley of sentiment, passion, and expediency which makes up the argument of the politician ?

And then if one turns from the practical man to the theorist I do not know that one finds much rest there. Herbert Spencer seems to me to be guilty of what Comte defines as materialism : he applies the laws of a lower to the subject-matter of a higher science—his social theories are biological laws illustrated by social facts.

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He bases sociological laws on the analogy of the organism ; and this analogy, in so far as it deals with the identity of the functions of the " being " called society with the function of the " being " called the individual, seems to me unproved hypothesis.

One might as well attempt to describe the nature of organic life by the laws which govern inorganic existence.

Then this analogy of the organism cuts both ways. Herbert Spencer maintains that because society is a natural growth it should not be interfered with. But it is quite possible to argue that the government is a " naturally differentiated organ " (as he would express it) developed by the organism to gratify its own sensations. This might lead straight to a state socialism—logically it leads to pure necessarianism, since whatever happens is natural, even the death of the organism.

So I think, if I were a man, and had an intellect, I would leave political action and political theorising to those with faith and examine and try to describe correctly and proportionately what actually happened in the different strata of society ; more especially the spontaneous growth of organisation—to try and discover the laws governing its birth, life and death.

I do not believe we can deduce social laws from the laws of another science ; nor do I believe that there is an intuitive perception of them in the majority of men's minds—I believe they will only be discovered by great minds working on carefully prepared data, and for the most part I think these data have yet to be collected and classified.

In the meantime, as a citizen looking to the material and spiritual welfare of my descendants, I object to these gigantic experiments, state-education and state-intervention in other matters, which are now being inaugurated and which savour of inadequately thought-out theories—the most dangerous of all social poisons. Neither do they seem to me to be the result of the spontaneously expressed desires of the people ; but rather the crude prescriptions of social quacks seeking to relieve vague feelings of pain and discomfort experienced by the masses. [MS. diary, July 1884.]

Less self-conscious and elaborately composed is an entry in my diary three months later, after a discussion with my

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brother-in-law, C. A. Cripps. I add it here because it reveals the deep-lying controversy, between the Ego that affirms and the Ego that denies, upon the issue, which was continuously present in my mind: Can we have a science of society, and if so, will its conclusions be accepted as a guiding light in public policy?

Stayed with the Alfred Cripps: Theresa fascinating as ever, slightly depressed with poor health, but sweetly happy in her marriage. Alfred keeps up his success at the Bar. Bought<sup>t</sup> the family place and taken to farming in these bad times, as a recreation! Evidently will not go into politics, except as "a scholar and a gentleman." He is not a leader of men; his opinions do not represent the desires of the masses; they are the result of an attempt to deduce laws of government from certain first principles of morality. His theory as to the present state of political life is that the tendency is to ignore principle and follow instinct; that this is based on the fallacious belief that what the people wish is right. He believes in principle, and in the possibility of reducing politics to a science. Many cultivated men think, with him, that political action should be governed by principle. But there is no body of doctrine upon which they can agree. Hence they cannot organise themselves into a party for working purposes. A reaction has set in against the doctrine of the philosophical Radicals; [a doctrine] insisted upon with so much dogmatism. . . . [This doctrine] seems to me to be a queer mixture of metaphysical principles, such as the equal rights of men, etc., and of laws such as those of political economy; laws true, no doubt, of the facts from which they were deduced, but recklessly applied to cover facts with which they have no proper relationship or connections. . . .

When one comes to ponder on this situation one feels how hopelessly incapable one really is of forming political opinions. The most one can do is to attempt to see truly what is actually happening, without attempting to foretell what will, from that, result. And even this more modest effort is immensely difficult for the observer of moderate power and with moderate opportunities. Possibly within that great organism, society, there may be changes now taking place, unregistered by any outward action in

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political life ; growth or decomposition outside the activity of the political organ. And these changes, whether for good or for evil, can only be discovered by the most patient observation, by men of highly sensitive feeling and well-trained intellect, and furnished with a comprehensive knowledge of social facts, past and present. Great genius will be required in social science. [MS. diary, November 6, 1884.]

## THE WORLD OF PHILANTHROPY

The world of politics in the 'seventies and 'eighties was intimately associated with the world of philanthropy.<sup>1</sup> The social reformers in Parliament, whether Conservatives or Liberals, belonged, almost invariably, to the groups of public-spirited and benevolent men and women within the metropolis or in the provincial towns who were initiating and directing the perpetual flow of charitable gifts from the nation of the rich to the nation of the poor. Now, it was

<sup>1</sup> Among the social changes in my lifetime, in the London that I have known, none is more striking than the passing "out of the picture" of personal almsgiving. I do not pretend to estimate to what extent the aggregate gifts of moneyed persons to individuals in distress (including gifts to such organisations as Lord Mayor's Funds, soup kitchens, shelters, etc.) may have fallen off; whilst the total of benefactions to hospitals, colleges and other institutions has plainly increased. But in the 'seventies and 'eighties individual almsgiving not only filled a large part of the attention of the philanthropically-minded, but also overflowed into Parliament, where, irrespective of political parties, these philanthropists exercised an important influence on governments. One of the effects of the Charity Organisation Society was, first to discredit individual almsgiving; and secondly, whilst replacing the habit of unthinking charity by a doctrine repellent in its apparent hardness, unwittingly to make it impossible for politicians to become associated with it. The divorce between Parliament and the once-influential doctrines of "enlightened charity" promulgated by the C.O.S. was completed by the rise, in the twentieth century of the Labour Party, with its insistence on social reconstruction, based not on charity but on equity, and on a scientifically ascertained advantage to the community as a whole.

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exactly in these decades that there arose, among the more enlightened philanthropists, a reactionary movement—a movement more potent in deterrence than the arguments of ratiocinating philosophers or the protests of cross-bench politicians, because it was based on the study of facts, and took the form of an alternative scheme for grappling, then and there, with the problem of poverty. And here I bring on the stage my friends the enemy—the Charity Organisation Society—one of the most typical of mid-Victorian social offsprings. In after years, when the latter-day leaders of charity organisation and I had become respectively propagandists of rival political and economic theories, we fought each other's views to the death. But in these years of my apprenticeship (1883–1887) the C.O.S. appeared to me as an honest though short-circuited attempt to apply the scientific method of observation and experiment, reasoning and verification, to the task of delivering the poor from their miseries by the personal service and pecuniary assistance tendered by their leisured and wealthy fellow-citizens.

The leading spirits of the Charity Organisation Society, when I first came across it in the spring of 1883, had been, in 1869, its principal founders—Octavia Hill,<sup>1</sup> Samuel Barnett, W. H. Fremantle,<sup>2</sup> and a younger man who had

<sup>1</sup> Octavia Hill (1838–1912)—not related to Matthew Davenport Hill and his equally well-known daughters, who were also active workers in social reform and philanthropy—see *Life of Octavia Hill*, by her brother-in-law, C. E. Maurice (1913); also “Miss Octavia Hill,” by Sir C. S. Loch, *Charity Organisation Review* for September and October 1912. Octavia Hill gave evidence before the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes in 1884, and before the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor in 1893, and was a member of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, 1905–9.

<sup>2</sup> W. H. Fremantle, at that time rector of the parish church of St. Marylebone, afterwards Dean of Ripon.

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recently become its secretary and was to become its chief protagonist—C. S. Loch.<sup>1</sup> These initiators of charity organisation were all of them distinguished for moral fervour and intellectual integrity. The immediate purpose of the Society was to organise all forms of charitable assistance so as to prevent overlapping and competition between the innumerable and heterogeneous agencies. And from the standpoint of the mid-Victorian time-spirit there was no gainsaying the worth of the three principles upon which this much-praised and much-abused organisation was avowedly based: patient and persistent personal service on the part of the well-to-do; an acceptance of personal responsibility for the ulterior consequences, alike to the individual reci-

<sup>1</sup> Charles Stewart Loch (1849–1923), son of an Indian judge; created a knight, 1915, on his resignation, owing to ill-health, of the secretaryship that he had held for nearly forty years. “That he was educated at Glenalmond and Balliol means comparatively little [writes the editor of the *Oxford Magazine* in 1905, when C. S. Loch was given the honorary degree of D.C.L.]; his life begins with his appointment as Secretary to the Charity Organisation Society, and even more, the life of the Society dates from his appointment. He has formulated a principle, and created a type. The Society, when he joined it, represented a praiseworthy, if somewhat Utopian, effort to bring about co-operation in the charitable world, and unity among its workers. It has since become the repository of wise counsels in all matters concerning the relief of the poor. It is widely disliked and universally trusted. Its friends are few, and they are *voces in deserto*, but they win a hearing. That independence is among the most valuable of the goods and chattels that a man possesses; that to wound independence is to do grievous harm; to foster independence is true charity; that character is nine-tenths of life; that the State shares with indiscriminate charity the distinction of being a mighty engine for evil—these and kindred precepts are summed up under the name.” He served on many Royal Commissions and committees of enquiry, and published many papers and articles. His principal book was *Charity and Social Life*, 1910. For sympathetic appreciations of his work, see *Charity Organisation Review* for April 1923.

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pient and to others who might be indirectly affected, of charitable assistance ; and finally, as the only way of carrying out this service and fulfilling this responsibility, the application of the scientific method to each separate case of a damaged body or a lost soul ; so that the assistance given should be based on a correct forecast of what would actually happen, as a result of the gift, to the character and circumstances of the individual recipient and to the destitute class to which he belonged. In the life of her husband Mrs. Barnett gives a graphic description of the state of mind of Octavia Hill and Samuel Barnett in the early days of charity organisation. " Counting that the only method of improving social conditions was by raising individuals, she [Octavia Hill] held that it was impertinent to the poor and injurious to their characters to offer them doles. They should be lifted out of pauperism by being expected to be self-dependent, and, in evidence of respect, be offered work instead of doles, even if work has to be created artificially,"<sup>1</sup> " One old gentleman I remember who sat at the end of the table, and therefore next to the applicants," reports to Mrs. Barnett a member of one of the first C.O.S. committees, " slipped a sixpence under the corner of it into a poor woman's hand, as Miss Hill was pointing out to her the reasons why we could not give her money, and offering her the soundest advice. The old gentleman was afterwards called to account by your husband and melted into tears for his own delinquency ! " <sup>2</sup>

Now this trivial incident illustrates better than any general explanation the subversive character of the movement, alike in thought and feeling, initiated by the founders of the

<sup>1</sup> *Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, by his Wife, vol. i. p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

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Charity Organisation Society. To the unsophisticated Christian, even of the nineteenth century, almsgiving was essentially a religious exercise, a manifestation of his love of God, of his obedience to the commands of his Lord and Saviour. "Give unto every one that asketh thee," "Sell all that thou hast and give unto the poor," were perhaps counsels of perfection impracticable for the householder with family responsibilities, and fit only for the saint whose entire life was dedicated to the service of God. Yet this universal and unquestioning yielding up of personal possessions for common consumption was thought to be the ideal conduct; the precious fruit of divine compassion. The spirit of unquestioning, of unrestricted—in short, of infinite—charity was, to the orthodox Christian, not a process by which a given end could be attained, but an end in itself—a state of mind—one of the main channels through which the individual entered into communion with the supreme spirit of love at work in the universe.<sup>1</sup>

How opposite was the state of mind and consequent conduct of the enlightened philanthropists of mid-Victorian

<sup>1</sup> This conception of almsgiving as an end in itself, a desirable state of the soul comparable to prayer and fasting, seems still to be the predominant attitude of orthodox Roman Catholics, derived as it undoubtedly is from the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. According to Origen, we are told by the historian of *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church*, the first forgiveness of sins is obtained by baptism, the second by martyrdom, the third is that which is procured by almsgiving. Prayer and alms from the beginning always accompanied each other, as the Scriptures had always combined them. They form together the outward expression of the inward sacrifice of the heart. Clement of Alexandria warns the faithful not to judge who is deserving and who is undeserving. "For by being fastidious and setting thyself to try who are fit for thy benevolence, and who are not, it is possible that thou mayest neglect some who are the friends of God." (See *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church*, by G. Uhlhorn, pp. 121-50.)



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times ! To the pioneer of the new philanthropy, " to give unto every one who asketh thee " was a mean and cruel form of self-indulgence. " These petty and oft-repeated, while heedless, liberalities, by which many a sentimentalist scatters poison on every side," had been the contemptuous dismissal of almsgiving from the category of virtues by the great Scot—Robert Chalmers—the pioneer of charity reform in the first half of the nineteenth century. " What educationalists have to do," thunders an early exponent of the new doctrine, " is to instruct (if they can be taught) the large dole-giving community, and to get them punished, as did our ancestors some centuries ago; but, above all, to purge the nation of the hypocrisy which sends the mendicant to prison, while for the great parent central vice of dole-giving it has only mild reproofs, or even gentle commendation. If you will bring about the due punishment of this low vice; if you will somehow contrive to handcuff the indiscriminate almsgiver, I will promise you, for reasons which I could assign, these inevitable consequences: no destitution, little poverty, lessened poor-rates, prisons emptier, fewer gin-shops, less crowded madhouses, sure signs of under-population, and an England worth living in."<sup>1</sup> Or take a saner statement by Samuel Barnett in 1874: " Indiscriminate charity is among the curses of London. To put the result of our observation in the strongest form, I would say that ' the poor starve because of the alms they receive.' The people of this parish live in rooms the state of which is a disgrace to us as a nation. Living such a life, they are constantly brought into contact with soft-hearted people. Alms are given them—a shilling by one, a sixpence by another, a dinner here and some clothing there; the gift is not sufficient if

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Guy, in Walker's *Original*, p. 239 (quoted in *Social Work in London*, 1869–1912, by Helen Bosanquet, pp. 6 and 7).

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they are really struggling, the care is not sufficient if they are thriftless or wicked. The effect of this charity is that a state of things to make one's heart bleed is perpetuated. The people never learn to work or to save; out-relief from 'the House,' or the dole of the charitable, has stood in the way of providence, which God their Father would have taught them."<sup>1</sup>

The belief—it may almost be called an obsession—that the mass-misery of great cities arose mainly, if not entirely, from spasmodic, indiscriminate and unconditional doles, whether in the form of alms or in that of Poor Law relief, was, in the 'sixties and 'seventies, the common opinion of such enlightened members of the governing class as were interested in the problem of poverty. Their hypothesis seemed to be borne out alike by personal observation, the teaching of history and deductions of the Political Economists. There was the patent fact, crystal clear to intelligent workers among the poor, that casually and arbitrarily administered doles undermined, in the average sensual man, the desire to work; cultivated, in recipients and would-be recipients, deceitfulness, servility and greed; and, worst of all, attracted to the dole-giving district the unemployed, under-employed and unemployable from the adjacent country. Thus were formed, in the slums of great cities, stagnant pools of deteriorated men and women, incapable of steady work, demoralising their children and all new-comers and perpetually dragging down each other into ever lower depths of mendicancy, sickness and vice. Nor was historical proof lacking. How often were we told of the success of the reform of the Poor Law in 1834, when the summary stoppage of Outdoor Relief to the able-bodied and their families resulted in a quick transformation of an idle and

<sup>1</sup> *Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, by his Wife, vol. i. p. 83.

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rebellious people into the industrious and docile population of the countryside, ready to accept the ministrations of the clergy and the steady employment at low wages tendered by the farmer and the squire ! To the abstract economist of the period, the giving of alms or Poor Law relief seemed, indeed, to have the double evil of not merely discouraging the poor from working, but also of actually injuring the more industrious by lessening the amount of the wage-fund distributed among them in return for their labour. When we realise that behind all this array of inductive and deductive proof of the disastrous effect on the wage-earning class of any kind of subvention, there lay the subconscious bias of "the Haves" against taxing themselves for "the Have Nots," it is not surprising that the demonstration carried all before it; and the tenets of the originators of the idea of charity organisation found ready acceptance among the enlightened members of the propertied class.

The argument pointed, indeed, not to any organisation of philanthropy, but to its abandonment as a harmful futility. And yet these devoted men and women, unlike the mass of property owners, were yearning to spend their lives in the service of the poor. What was clear to them was that the first requisite was the thorough investigation of each case, in order to save themselves from being taken in by the plausible tales of those who hastened to prey upon their credulity. But when the circumstances had been investigated, and genuine need had been established, what line was the enlightened "friend of the poor" to pursue ? The first idea was to eliminate those whose evil state could be plausibly ascribed to their own culpable negligence or misconduct. All enlightened philanthropy was to be concentrated on "the deserving," the others being left to a penal Poor Law. Any such line of demarcation was, how-

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ever, soon found impracticable. It was only in a small proportion of extreme cases, on one side or the other, that any confident judgement could be pronounced as to whether the past life of an unfortunate family had or had not been marked, not only by freedom from patent vice or crime, but by such a degree of consistent sobriety, industry, integrity and thrift as warranted its classification among the deserving. Moreover, any such classification by merit was found to have no relation to the necessary classification according to needs. The most deserving cases often proved to be those whom it was plainly impossible to help effectively either by money or by the philanthropic jobbery that got its favourites into situations. Most numerous were the cases of chronic sickness, or those needing prolonged and expensive medical treatment. Others, again, were hopeless without a complete change of environment. There were innumerable other varieties ruled out, in practice, because any adequate dealing with them involved an expense altogether beyond the means available. Eventually the Charity Organisation Society was driven to drop the criterion of desert; "the test is not whether the applicant be deserving but whether he is helpable," we were told.<sup>1</sup> No relief was to be given that was not "adequate," that is to say, such as could be hoped, in due time, to render the person or family self-supporting. No relief was to be given where the person was either so bad in point of character, or so chronic in need, as to be incapable of permanent restoration to the ranks of the self-supporting. All "hopeless" cases—that is, persons whom there was no hopeful prospect of rendering permanently self-supporting (perhaps "because no suitable charity exists")—were, however blameless and morally

<sup>1</sup> Principles of Decision, C.O.S. Papers, No. 5. I quote from the revised edition, July 1905, as I have not the original leaflet.

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deserving had been their lives, to be handed over to the semi-penal Poor Law. We may admit that some such principles as these were, in practice, almost forced upon any systematic private philanthropists. But it is difficult to see how they could be made consistent with the duty, persistently inculcated, of personal friendship with the poor. The intruder in the poor man's hovel, mixing rigorous questioning as to the conduct and income of every member of the family with expressions of friendly sympathy, was supposed finally to decide in innumerable instances that the case, though thoroughly deserving, was so desperately necessitous as to be incapable of adequate help, and so hopeless of permanent restoration that no aid whatsoever could possibly be given. The one door opened by these "friends of the poor" to all those they were unable to help privately, deserving as well as undeserving, was that of the workhouse, with its penal discipline "according to the principles of 1834." Thus, well-to-do men and women of goodwill who had gone out to offer personal service and friendship to the dwellers in the slums, found themselves transformed into a body of amateur detectives, in some cases initiating prosecutions of persons they thought to be impostors, and arousing more suspicion and hatred than the recognised officers of the law. The pioneers of organised charity had made unwittingly an ominous discovery. By rudely tearing off the wrappings of mediæval almsgiving disguising the skeleton at the feast of capitalist civilisation, they had let loose the tragic truth that, wherever society is divided into a minority of "Haves" and a multitude of "Have Nots," charity is twice cursed, it curseth him that gives and him that takes. Under such circumstances, to quote the phrase of Louise Michel, "philanthropy is a lie." For human relationships, whether between individuals,

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groups or races, do not thrive in an emotional vacuum; if you tune out fellow-feeling and the common consciousness of a social equity, you tune in insolence, envy and "the wrath that is to come."

The theory and practice of the Charity Organisation Society, in spite of its vogue among those who counted themselves enlightened, found small acceptance among the Christian Churches, any more than among the impulsive givers of alms. Thus the C.O.S. found itself baulked in its purpose of organising the multifarious charities of the Metropolis; neither the Churches nor the hospitals, neither the orphanages nor the agencies for providing the destitute with food, clothing or shelter, would have anything to do with a society which sought to impose methods that appeared the very negation of Christian charity. Instead of serving as a co-ordinating body to all the other charities, in order to prevent their harmful overlapping and wasteful competition, the C.O.S. became itself the most exclusive of sects, making a merit of disapproving and denouncing much of the practice of other charitable agencies (for instance, the social activities of the Salvation Army); and at the same time failing to obtain anything like the army of personal "friends of the poor," or anything approaching the great amount of money, that would have enabled it to cope, on its own principles, with the vast ocean of poverty that had somehow to be dealt with. The C.O.S. went yet one step further. It had become apparent, even in early Victorian times, that the greater part of the work of preventing destitution, as distinguished from relieving it after it had occurred, necessarily transcended individual capacity, and must be undertaken, if at all, by a public authority, with compulsory powers of dealing with private property, and at the expense of public funds. The great Scottish

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forerunner of charity organisation, Thomas Chalmers, whilst strongly objecting both to almsgiving and to the outdoor relief of the Poor Law authorities, had equally strenuously supported the public provision, even, if need be, gratuitously, of universal schooling for the children and of universal medical and surgical treatment, both institutional and domiciliary, for the sick and infirm of all kinds; and most remarkable of all, a universal provision, preferably by private philanthropy, of honourable pensions and almshouses for all the aged who found themselves in need of such aid. In London, Edwin Chadwick, who had so large a share in the great Poor Law Report of 1834, was in these years still able to describe how he had been at first convinced that it was the indiscriminate, inadequate and unconditional outdoor relief of the old Poor Law that was the cause of the great mass of destitution. A very few years of actual administration of the Act of 1834 had, however, taught him that the mere arrest of demoralising dole-giving, admirable as it was, left untouched the fundamental causes of destitution, especially among the most deserving. Within a decade Edwin Chadwick had become as infatuated an advocate of positive municipal action in the provision of drainage, paving, water supply, open spaces, improved dwellings, hospitals and what not, as he had ever been of the stoppage of outdoor relief and charitable doles. But the C.O.S. had apparently forgotten the experience of these forerunners. Its leading members added to their sectarian creed as to the necessary restrictions of the impulse of charity, an equally determined resistance to any extension of State or municipal action, whether in the way of the physical care of children at school, housing accommodation, medical attendance or old-age pensions, however plausibly it might be argued, in the spirit of Chalmers and Chadwick,

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that only by such collective action could there be any effective prevention of the perennial recruiting of the army of destitutes. Hence Octavia Hill, C. S. Loch and their immediate followers concentrated their activities on schooling the poor in industry, honesty, thrift and filial piety; whilst advocating, in occasional asides, or by parenthetical phrases, the moralisation of the existing governing class, and its spontaneous conversion to a benevolent use of its necessarily dominant wealth and power.

The common basis underlying the principle of restricting private charity to exceptional cases, and the analogous but not necessarily related principle of governmental *laissez-faire*, is easily discovered. However well aware these estimable leaders of the C.O.S. may have been of personal shortcomings, they, unlike many of their contemporaries, had not the faintest glimmer of what I have called "the consciousness of collective sin."<sup>1</sup> In their opinion, modern

<sup>1</sup> One of the jarring notes of the C.O.S. was their calm assumption of social and mental superiority over the poor whom they visited. In these more democratic days, how odd sounds the following description of Octavia Hill's "At Home" to her old tenants, related by Mrs. Barnett with perhaps a touch of irony. "I recall the guests coming in shyly by the back entrance, and the rather exaggerated cordiality of Miss Octavia's greeting in the effort to make them feel welcome; and Miss Miranda's bright tender way of speaking to every one exactly alike, were they rich or poor; and old Mrs. Hill's curious voice with its rather rasping purr of pride and pleasure and large-heartedness, as she surveyed her motley groups of friends; and the two Miss Harrisons [who presumably had entered the house by the front door], those beautiful and generous artistic souls, the one so fat and short and the other so tall and thin, and their duet, purposely wrongly rendered to provoke the communion of laughter, ending with the invitation to every one to say 'Quack, quack,' as loudly as each was able, if only to prove they were all 'ducks.' Miss F. Davenport Hill was there, and Mr. C. E. Maurice and Miss Emma Cons and Miss Emily Hill and Mr. Barnett. . . ." (*Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, by his Wife, vol. i. p. 34).



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capitalism was the best of all possible ways of organising industries and services; and if only meddling persons would refrain from interfering with its operations, the maximum social welfare as well as the maximum national wealth would be secured for the whole community. Barring accident to life and health, which happens to both rich and poor, any family could, they assumed, maintain its "independence" from the cradle to the grave, if only its members were reasonably industrious, thrifty, honest, sober and dutiful. Thus any attempt by private or public expenditure to alter "artificially" the economic environment of the manual-working class so as to lessen the severity of the "natural" struggle for existence must, they imagined, inevitably undermine these essential elements of personal character, and would, in the vast majority of cases, make the state of affairs worse than before, if not for the individual, at any rate for the class and the race. Thus, in the world of philanthropy as in the world of politics, as I knew it in the 'eighties, there seemed to be one predominant question: Were we, or were we not, to assume the continuance of the capitalist system as it then existed; and if not, could we, by taking thought, mend or end it?

The break-away of Samuel and Henrietta Barnett in 1886 from the narrow and continuously hardening dogma of the Charity Organisation Society sent a thrill through the philanthropic world of London. The denunciation of indiscriminate charity in 1874 (quoted above) was not recanted. But during the intervening twelve years' residence in the very midst of the worst misery of the East End of London, the Barnetts had followed in the footsteps of Robert Chalmers and Edwin Chadwick. They had discovered for themselves that there was a deeper and more continuous evil than unrestricted and unregulated charity, namely,

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unrestricted and unregulated capitalism and landlordism. They had become aware of the employment of labour at starvation rates; of the rack-renting of insanitary tenements; of the absence of opportunities for education, for refined leisure and for the enjoyment of nature, literature and art among the denizens of the mean streets; they had come to realise that the principles of personal service and personal responsibility for ulterior consequences, together with the application of the scientific method, ought to be extended, from the comparatively trivial activity of almsgiving to the behaviour of the employer, the landlord and the consumer of wealth without work. Their eyes had been opened, in fact, to all the sins of commission and omission, whether voluntary or involuntary, committed by the relatively small minority of the nation who, by means of their status or possessions, exercised economic power over the masses of their fellow-countrymen. Thus without becoming Socialists, in either the academic or the revolutionary meaning of the term, they initiated or furthered a long series of socialistic measures, all involving increased public expenditure and public administration, of which Samuel Barnett's advocacy in 1883 of universal State-provided old-age pensions may be taken as a type—an advocacy which, be it added, eventually converted Charles Booth, and led to his remarkable demonstration of the expedience and practicability of pensions to the aged poor. But what appealed most insistently to the rector of St. Jude's was not the provision of the necessities of life, but the provision of the pleasures of life. "I do not want many alterations in the law," modestly explained Samuel Barnett to an interviewer in 1892, "but I should like the best things made free. We want many more baths and wash-houses, especially swimming baths; and they should be free and open in every district. Books and pictures

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should be freely shown, so that every man may have a public library or a picture gallery as his drawing-room, where he can enjoy what is good with his boys and girls. We want more open spaces, so that every man, woman and child might sit in the open air and see the sky and the sunset. . . . We want free provision of the best forms of pleasure. Denmark provides travelling scholarships, and our school authorities are taking steps in that direction. . . . Poverty cannot pay for the pleasure which satisfies, and yet, without that pleasure, the people perish.”<sup>1</sup>

How can I make my readers see, as they are engraved in memory, the figures of Samuel and Henrietta Barnett, and the impression they made on the philanthropic workers and social investigators of the London of the 'eighties?

First the Rector of St. Jude's and founder of Toynbee Hall. A diminutive body clothed in shabby and badly assorted garments, big knobby and prematurely bald head, small black eyes set close together, sallow complexion and, a thin and patchy pretence of a beard, Barnett, at first sight, was not pleasing to contemplate! Yet, with growing intimacy, you found yourself continuously looking at him, watching the swift changes in expression, detached but keen observation of the persons present, followed by a warmly appreciative smile at something said; the far-away, wondering look of a questioning mind, passing suddenly and unexpectedly into emotional enthusiasm or moral indignation, and then melting back again into the calmness of an argumentative intelligence. And as an always present background for these rapid transformations, an utter absence of personal vanity, an almost exaggerated Christian humility, arising perhaps from what the modern psychologist calls a

<sup>1</sup> *Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, by his Wife, vol. ii. p. 12.

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permanent "inferiority complex"—an attitude especially marked towards his adored and gifted wife !

What charmed his comrades at work in the East End, and I speak from personal experience, was Barnett's fathomless sympathy; his "quickness at the uptake" of your moral and intellectual perplexities; his inspiring encouragement for your strivings after the nobler self. But this nineteenth-century saint had his limitations, alike as an ecclesiastic and a citizen. He had no special intellectual or artistic gifts; he was neither a scholar nor a skilled researcher; he was not a reasoner nor a scientific observer; he had no personal magnetism as a preacher, no fluency as a lecturer; he had no special talent in the choice and use of words. Meticulous lawyers found him muddle-headed when explaining schemes of reform; fanatics discovered indispensable links absent in the consistent working out of a creed; and hard-sensed and literal-minded men and women felt that he was Jesuitical in the way he jumped from standpoint to standpoint in search of common ground upon which might be based united action in the direction he desired.<sup>1</sup> He was, in fact, far too intent on what he conceived to be the purpose of human life—a noble state of mind in each individual and in the community as a whole—to concentrate

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Barnett, with characteristic candour, quotes C. S. Loch's somewhat ungenerous characterisation of her husband—be it added, in the heat of controversy ! "With Mr. Barnett progress is a series of reactions. He must be in harmony with the current philanthropic opinion of the moment or perhaps just a few seconds ahead of it. Then having laid great stress on a new point, he would 'turn his back on himself' and lay equal stress on the point that he had before insisted on. Thus, he was at one time in favour of suppressing outdoor relief and promoting thrift, now he favours outdoor relief in a new guise" (this is Mr. Loch's phrase for old-age pensions) "and depreciates thrift" (*Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, by his Wife, vol. ii. p. 267).

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on the process by which this end could be reached. These shortcomings were the defects of one outstanding characteristic. Samuel Barnett journeyed through life "as if" he was in continuous communion with an external spirit of love; and "as if" man's purpose on earth was to make this spirit of love supreme in society. Men and women, however vicious or stupid they might be, were approached "as if" each one of them had an immortal soul. "Do you believe in personal immortality?" his wife asked him. "I can imagine life on no other basis," he replied.<sup>1</sup> More expressive of Barnett's mentality than any words of mine is an entry in his diary when a very young man, which his wife tells us was always kept in his private drawer as his idea of life. "When I calmly think what is best in life I see it is goodness; that which I feel to be good, which means restraint from spite, impurity, or greed, and which manifests itself in love. Goodness is more desirable than power. I set myself to gain goodness. I check all emotions towards its opposite and I reach out to contemplate itself. I try to find what that is of which I feel my impressions of goodness to be but a shadow. There is, somewhere, perfect goodness. I commune with ideas of goodness which is equivalent to praying to God. Across my vision passes a figure of perfect Man. I am seized, borne on by Jesus Christ. In communing with Him I find the greatest help to reaching goodness. I pray to Jesus Christ and through Him come to the Father."<sup>2</sup> Hence his never-failing optimism about the future; tempered, be it added, by recurring waves of depression with regard to the actual working of human nature as he surveyed it, in his day-by-day experience of men and affairs, from the heights of his own scale of values.

<sup>1</sup> *Canon Barnett, His Life, Work, and Friends*, by his Wife, vol. ii. p. 379.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 97.

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Thus Samuel Barnett was not wholly representative of the mid-Victorian time-spirit: he carried over some of the mysticism of what we are apt to call "primitive christianity"; an overwhelming faith in the validity of the dominant impulse of the Christ and the Buddha; beneficence towards all human beings irrespective of their characteristics.

Is it an impertinence to write about one who is still with us? My excuse is that the Barnetts were an early example of a new type of human personality, in after years not uncommon; a double-star-personality, the light of the one being indistinguishable from that of the other.

At nineteen years of age, pretty, witty, and well-to-do, Henrietta Rowland married the plain and insignificant curate who was her fellow-worker in the parish of St. Marylebone; not solely, so I gather from her own account, because he had won her admiration and affection, but also as a way of dedicating her life to the service of the poor. In many of her characteristics she was the direct antithesis of her husband, and, exactly on this account, she served as complement to him, as he did to her. Assuredly she was not hampered by the "inferiority complex!" A breezy self-confidence, a naive self-assertion—sometimes to the borderline of bad manners—was her note towards the world at large. Lavishly admiring, loving and loyal towards friends and comrades, her attitude towards those whose conduct she condemned—for instance, towards the heartless rich, the sweating employer, or the rack-renting landlord—was that they required "spanking," and that she was prepared to carry out this chastisement, always assuming that she thought it would lead to their reformation! She may have been influenced by her husband's mysticism, but her native bent was a rationalist interpretation of the facts of life. The emotion that was the warp of her web was not the merging of self

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in a force that makes for righteousness, but the service of man, or rather of the men and women in her near neighbourhood. To this vocation she brought a keener and more practical intellect than her husband; a directness of intention and of speech which excited sometimes admiration, sometimes consternation, in her associates; and, be it added, a sense of humour which was "masculine" in its broadness, offensive to the fastidious and invigorating to those who enjoyed laughter at the absurdities of their own and other people's human nature. For all the business side of philanthropy, for initiation, advertisement, negotiation and execution, her gifts rose at times to veritable genius.

To this sketch I add an entry in the MS. diary illustrating the influence of the Barnetts over their fellow-workers.

Visit of three days from the Barnetts, which has confirmed my friendship with them. Mr. Barnett distinguished for unself-consciousness, humility and faith. Intellectually he is suggestive; with a sort of moral insight almost like that of a woman. And in another respect he is like a strong woman. He is much more anxious that human nature should *feel rightly* than that they should *think truly*, and *being* is more important with him than *doing*. He told me that Comte, F. D. Maurice and history had influenced him most. But evidently the influence had been more on his character than on his intellect; for intellectually he has no system of thought, no consistent bias—his thought is only the tool whereby his feeling expresses itself.

He was very sympathetic about my work and anxious to be helpful. But he foresaw in it dangers to my character; and it was curious to watch the minister's anxiety about the *morale* of his friend creep out in all kinds of hints. He held up as a moral scarecrow the "Oxford Don"—the man or woman without human ties—with no care for the details of life. He told his wife that I reminded him of Octavia Hill; and as he described Miss Hill's life as one of isolation from superiors and from inferiors, it is clear what rocks he saw ahead. I tried to explain to him my

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doctrine of nervous energy; that you are only gifted with a certain quantity, and that if it were spent in detail it could not be reserved for large undertakings. But as he suggested very truly, if all the thought and time spent on egotistical castle-building or brooding were spent on others, your neighbourly and household duties would be well fulfilled without encroaching on the fund reserved for your work.

Mrs. Barnett is an active-minded, true and warm-hearted woman. She is conceited; she would be objectionably conceited if it were not for her genuine belief in her husband's superiority—not only to the rest of the world (which would be only another form of conceit)—but to herself. Her constant flow of spirits, her invigorating energy, is incalculably helpful to her husband. Her nature is saturated with courage and with truthfulness; her sympathies are keen and her power of admiration for others strong. Her personal aim in life is to raise womanhood to its rightful position; as equal [to] though unlike manhood. The crusade she has undertaken is the fight against impurity as the main factor in debasing women from a status of independence to one of physical dependence. The common opinion that a woman is a nonentity unless joined to a man, she resents as a "blasphemy." Like all crusaders, she is bigoted, and does not recognise all the facts that tell against her faith. I told her that the only way in which we can convince the world of our power is to show it. And for that it will be needful for women with strong natures to remain celibate; so that the special force of womanhood—motherly feeling—may be forced into public work.

In religious faith Mr. Barnett is an idealistic Christian without dogma, and Mrs. Barnett an agnostic with idealism; in social faith, the man a Christian Socialist, the woman an individualist. The woman is really the more masculine-minded of the two. Mr. Barnett's personal aim is to raise the desires of men and women—to cultivate their higher tastes: to give the poor the luxuries and not the necessities of life. The danger which I foresee of mental strain, and thence melancholy, he looks upon as imaginary. And I think myself, that in my fear of melancholy for the race, I am governed by the bias of my own rather morbid constitution. It was not an overstrained mind which made our Aired relations suicidal: they were innocent of intellectual effort. And I have



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inherited the suicidal constitution, and, naturally enough, I connect it with other qualities of my nature, whereas it may be only co-existent with these qualities.

The Bannetts' visit braced me up to further effort and stronger resignation. But in my work of observation, I must endeavour to get in front of my own shadow—else I shall end by disbelieving in sunshine ! [MS. diary, August 29, 1887.]

The result upon my mind of the controversy between the rigid voluntaryism of the Charity Organisation Society, on the one hand, and on the other, the empirical socialism of Samuel and Henrietta Barnett, was a deepening conviction that the facts collected by philanthropists—by small groups of heroic men and women struggling, day in and day out, under depressing circumstances, with crowds of destitute persons clamouring for alms—were too doubtful and restricted to lead to any proven conclusion as to the meaning of poverty in the midst of riches. What was the actual extent and intensity of this destitution ? Could it be explained by the shortcomings of the destitute persons or families themselves, whether by delinquency, drunkenness, unwillingness to work, or a lack of practicable thrift, all forms of bad behaviour which were likely to be aggravated by the thoughtless almsgiving of the rich ? And in the case of admittedly deserving persons, was the destitution existing in East London confined to particular areas, or to groups of families exceptionally affected by epidemics or by temporary dislocations of trade ? Or were we confronted, as the Socialists were perpetually reiterating, with a mass of fellow-citizens, constituting a large proportion of the inhabitants of Great Britain, and made up of men and women of all degrees of sobriety, honesty and capacity, who were habitually in a state of chronic poverty, and who throughout their lives were shut out from all that makes civilisation worth

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having? My state of mind at that date can, I think, be best expressed in the words of Charles Darwin, when he was puzzling over the problem of the emergence of man.

I have often experienced [he writes to Sir Joseph Hooker] what you call the humiliating feeling of getting more and more involved in doubt, the more one thinks of the facts and reasoning on doubtful points. But I always comfort myself with thinking of the future, and in the full belief that the problems which we are just entering on, will some day be solved; and if we just break the ground we shall have done some service, even if we reap no harvest.<sup>1</sup>

Now it is exactly this process of "breaking the ground" over a sufficiently large area, without too anxiously reckoning the harvest, that I shall describe in the following chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Letter from C. Darwin to J. D. Hooker, January 20, 1859, *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, by Francis Darwin, vol. ii, p. 144 (1887).



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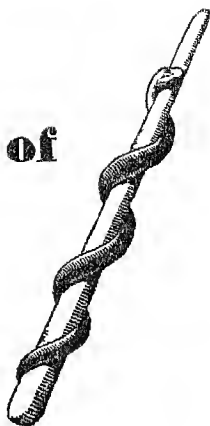
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